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ABSTRACT

This monograph documents some aspects of school life at an Ontario school for kindergarten and first grade students. The report emphasizes some of the special features of the school, such as the use of parent volunteers; a highly individualized program based in a large measure on students' goals, interests, and readiness; a comprehensive evaluation of the kindergarten program; a parents' manual for home instruction that forged a new type of school-home cooperation; and a "mini-school" for preschoolers operated by parents as a pilot project in early childhood education. In addition, the school has for three years been the location of studies in inquiry, problemsolving, and other curriculum innovations; and, for a year, was one of the schools in which a model for parental assistance was implemented. (Photographs may reproduce poorly.) (Author/MLP)

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THE MAPLE GROVE STORY

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PREFACE

This monograph documents some aspects of school life at Maple Grove, a two-room rural school located in Lincoln County, on No. 8 Highway between Beamsville and Vineland, in Ontario's Niagara Peninsula. To the passerby, Maple Grove is just another little country schoolhouse. But the real school, which is the shared activities of pupils, teachers and parents, is in some respects unique among Ontario schools. This monograph emphasizes some of the special features which together have made Maple Grove a special kind of school. Some of these features are as follows:

- (1) The school is a pioneer in the use of parent volunteers.
- (2) The program of the school, based in a large measure on pupils' goals, interests and readiness, is highly individualized and provides for much freedom and considerable pupil-directed activity.
- (3) In response to the common question, "Do pupils really learn anything in such an unstructured program?", a comprehensive evaluation of the kindergarten program was conducted by a competent research team, the results of which are shown in this monograph.
- (4) The introduction of a parents' manual for home instruction forged a new type of school-home cooperation.
- (5) The school has for three years been closely identified with the Niagara Centre of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and has been the location of studies in inquiry, problem

solving and other curriculum innovations, and for a year was one of the schools in which the Centre's model for parental assistance was implemented.

(6) A "mini-school" for pre-schoolers has been operated by parents as a pilot project in early childhood education.

It is hoped and expected that the descriptions of some of these features will be useful to other schools working to incorporate some of the major innovations herein described. The monograph has one further value -- at a time when many small schools are being closed for reasons of economy, transportation, or greater resources for learning, a description of Maple Grove is worth recording, if only for historical purposes.

As a person involved in the day to day operations in a school system I am pleased to see this type of cooperation between O.I.S.E. and the staff of the Lincoln County Board of Education. The action-testing of innovative practices as documented in this report provides a pattern for evaluating other new practices. The monograph is really a tribute to the school community, the parents and the O.I.S.E. support personnel.

G. R. Allan
Director
Lincoln County Board
of Education
September, 1972

Chapter 1: IN THE BEGINNING

The story of Maple Grove School is typical of rural Ontario. As with many rural Ontario schools, Maple Grove's beginnings reach back in history to pre-Confederation days. In 1832, the first building was erected on the corner of an original settler's farm. Founding a school in that day was a major sacrifice. The only government support available for a common school was a grant, based on the number of pupils, payable to the school master as part of his salary. The grant was payable only when enrolment reached twenty, and could not exceed twenty-five pounds per year.¹ All other costs for the construction and maintenance of the building, for materials, and for the remainder of the school master's salary depended on voluntary provision from within the locality.

There have been three school buildings in all, each on the original site; the present one was built in 1944, still on the southwest corner of Hipple's vineyard.

A visitors' book, yellowed by its 86 years, bears this notation:

Apr. 22, 1886.

As a teacher I visited the school today, for the purpose of improving my plan of teaching and have not visited it in vain. I have been much profited by the skillful way in which the teacher managed the recitation and brought out the ideas of the pupils.

E. Michener

¹. C. E. Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada, p. 112.

Roland Michener's father! He was 19 at the time, teacher and then preacher before statesman. The Michener homestead is just over the escarpment and down a few concessions.

As with many rural Ontario Schools, Maple Grove was the centre of community activities. From the beginning there were bridal showers and even wedding receptions. Card parties were organized by a committee of trustees from four schools. They took place every two weeks at Maple Grove -- cards in the east room, dancing in the west room, young children in the basement. There were big community-involved Christmas Concerts. Trustees brought Christmas tree decorations, built a stage, provided a tree. This continued until the 1960's.

With the advent of amalgamated school boards, the little local three-man boards presiding over each little local school were discarded in favor of five-man boards having jurisdiction over, in the case of Clinton Township, six schools spread across the township. Children were bussed to single-grade classrooms. It was possible in one family to have children in five different schools. Showers and card parties were discontinued. A fee was levied on the use of the school. Frustrations developed. "Why does my child have to be bussed to that school when we live right nearby this one?" Home and School organizations trying to operate in each school had an unenviable task.

Parents dealt with a No-man's land. As any teacher can attest, philosophy, procedure, methodology and policy differ with each

school and each classroom. When children were promoted it was usually to a grade located in another school building with its different principal and staff. There was a crying need for communication.

How many times could this tale be told throughout rural Ontario, with only the name of the school to be changed?

In September, 1966, the Grades Two and Three were bussed away. In the fall of 1968 there were enough Kindergarten children so that it was purely a kindergarten school. In 1969 a kindergarten was opened in a second school in Clinton Township. This permitted the school to revert to a K and One grouping again.

It was in response to the challenge of change that unique curricular patterns evolved at Maple Grove.

Chapter 11: A PIONEER PROGRAM IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The amalgamation of school boards altered life at Maple Grove dramatically in September, 1965. With the change came great problems, but in meeting the issues the pattern was set for a new stage of development.

The Evolution of Maple Grove's Brand of Parental Involvement

September 1965 was D Day for Maple Grove -- Dispersal Day. Grades Four to Eight were bussed away. Grades One to Three remained and Kindergarten children from the six corners of Clinton Township were car-pooled in. There were two teachers and ninety children. Up to this date there had been no Kindergarten in the Township. Parents went to the school board and pressed for one. The board equipped Maple Grove, because of its location, as a centralized kindergarten school. Transportation was not provided, so parents were involved even before the Kindergarten doors swung open. They investigated insurance policies, accepted what liabilities were inevitable, and drove carloads to school.

It seemed natural in this setting to foster a close bond with parents. There were problems to be solved. Transportation was one big bug-bear. But couched in this very problem was an advantage in disguise. With many parents driving carpools every day, they were accessible -- running in to get their passengers and passing bits of information to us as they gathered up their cargoes. Our lines of communication were establishing themselves.

After a year of carpools some parents felt there must be a better way. So "Betsy Bones" was born. She was a Bedford Van, converted by one of the dads, Casey, who owned a body shop. One wife and mother, Sheila, drove the van -- providing a pick-up and delivery service for fifteen children who otherwise might not have made it to Kindergarten. Sheila painted kicking mules on the outside and lined benches along the insides. Driver and passengers sang songs to keep up their spirits. They all got stuck a few times. Betsy balked and stalled as she went up and down Cherry Hill, a steep rise along the Niagara Escarpment. As the year wore on, the balks and stalls increased; Sheila became pregnant; but Betsy Bones and our limited transportation company survived until June.

"Betsy Bones" typifies how involved parents can become. Sheila, a teacher-turned-mother, believed children should have the opportunity to attend Kindergarten. This belief was strong enough to motivate her to take on all responsibilities contingent with "Betsy Bones". She had to enquire into liabilities, bus driver's license, and finance. She was probably "out of pocket" at the end of the year but, in her own words, "While the year lasted we enjoyed many hilarious moments and, I hope, served our community in our own small way." Parents can be great!

Excursions

It was not difficult to be impressed by such involvement and to realize that in parents was a tremendous source of interest and help. As do teachers everywhere, the staff tapped that source of

help for parties and excursions. They would pack the whole school into willing parents' cars and head out in the mornings, repeating the whole performance in the afternoon for the other Kindergarten. They usually went to some willing parents' farm.

Questions kept popping up.

(1) What should be done with the disinterested children?

Besides, why weren't they interested?

(2) Why didn't all the children attack "follow-up" with gusto when they returned to the school?

(3) What should be done about leaving the school empty and alone -- telephone calls, deliveries, etc.? (We had no secretary.)

(4) Why did excursions have to be such a big, tiring, "equipment-and-time-consuming" undertaking?

(5) Why not have excursions smaller and more often?

(6) Parents were responsible for their children outside school hours, why not in school hours?

(1) The answer to question number 1 crystallized in the belief that it was best to leave disinterested children at school, not as discipline, but as common sense. Since humans are not all interested in the same thing, why insist on it for children? (Some children are actually allergic to farm animals!) So let Johnny stay at school and tackle something of more value to him than this particular excursion.

(2) The answer to question number 2 was in part the same as the first question. Maybe some children just were not interested or "turned-on". Besides, it gave the whole trip a phoney flavor to have everyone sit down and write a story or draw a picture about it, on their return. When everyone had been on the trip, who was left to tell anything to? An excursion was rich in subject matter but maybe the dissection and pursuit was best left to those vitally concerned, who could infect the "take-it-or-leave-its" with their enthusiasm.

(3) If some remained at school, the problem of the empty schoolhouse was solved.

(4) If only a few children went, transportation problems shrank. No need for buses or fleets of cars. Food and drink, ice cream and cookies and headaches took on manageable proportions and there would be no more cause for a dad to keep his eldest son home from school to help give 100 little gaffers pony rides -- no more exhausted dad, son or pony.

The answers to questions 5 and 6 were well served simply by: "Why not?"

Excursions were reduced in size to a carload -- six children and one parent. Teachers could stay at the school to "zero in" on individuals. For each child allowed to travel in a car, the school had on file the parent's signed consent. Drivers were advised to investigate their own insurance policies and liabilities. Board

responsibilities were examined. The principal, of course, accepted the final responsibility. Then perhaps, like the bus-driver-mother Sheila, everyone lived a little dangerously. After all plausible precautions have been taken, how else is there to LIVE? Fortunately, there were no accidents in the six years.

Reporting to Parents

Maple Grove's approach has always been "individualized". The application has improved with the involvement of more adults. The program naturally differed from programs in surrounding schools, and differed most drastically in the minds of those who knew least about it. Report cards just did not fill the bill in explaining what school was all about. In fact, teachers found themselves directing their energy and sometimes their adrenalin toward explaining away misconceptions derived from reading the report cards. Communication improved when the teacher said, "Come and see."

As the report cards did not serve any constructive purpose, they fell by the wayside, but not before a better substitute had filled their place. It was not a case of being against report cards and in a negative frame of mind, throwing them out, leaving a void. What seemed a better means of communication nudged out the old.

Observation Times Became Work Periods

Parents were invited to come to observe in the classrooms and

then discuss what they had seen. Duration of this observation period varied from an hour to half a day. It might include Mom and Dad and a baby or two, but usually only one home was represented at a time. It took the form of Mom and Dad and baby, all sitting on primary chairs. Mom and Dad became sleepy, bored and uncomfortable. The baby got restless. Exhibit Number 1, their kindergartener, became self-conscious. The teacher felt like a clown in a goldfish bowl, grew tense and red faced, and wanted to strangle the children, who also grew ill at ease and fidgety and seemingly took advantage of the whole artificial atmosphere. So that format did not last long.

Perhaps because of the individualized approach and lack of formalized PROGRAM for parents to watch, it was easy to farm out jobs for parents to do. If a child needed someone to listen to him count, a parent was asked to listen. Soon children were asking parents directly for help. The teacher kept her finger in the pie and everyone accepted mutely that she must remain the chief cook in the kitchen. If this were not accepted mutely, and she felt control slipping through her fingers, she simply voiced it, "Ask me first."

Before parents joined the group for a session, the teacher tried to assess what might be most helpful to each parent in understanding the program and his or her child. The teacher would line up in her mind certain work that the parent might scan to provide a constructive foil against which he or she might judge his or her own

child and his progress. The teacher would often say, "I rate a child's progress according to his own capabilities. I see no advantage in grading him according to other children, but if you wish to compare him according to the others, this is your opportunity. Look and see for yourself."

An additional difficulty was the large number of pupils at Maple Grove. In September, 1965, for example, two teachers cared for ninety children in Kindergarten and Grades One to Three. In 1969 the ratio was even heavier with 116 children and two teachers. It was not until December of that year that a half-time teacher was hired to relieve some of the load. During the most difficult period, parent involvement came to the rescue and in so doing consolidated its position in the life of the school.

In summary, at Maple Grove School parent involvement evolved in response to a cluster of thorny problems, and developed in concert with a desire to provide more than just a minimum level of education to children.

Chapter III: A RATIONALE FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL

Maple Grove is unique in many ways, but two of these are especially prominent. First, Maple Grove is a pioneer in the volunteer movement. In addition, the involvement of The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education assisted the staff in clarifying its objectives and in thinking more deeply about its procedures. For these reasons, the authors together believe that a brief historical perspective and a rationale for parental assistance should be presented.

Until the end of the Second World War, the prevailing philosophy of Canadian preschool and primary education strongly reflected what has been called the "embryological theory" of Arnold Gessell. According to the latter, given only the absence of an over-restrictive environment the child's readiness for a particular kind of mental task would reveal itself at its appointed time, and specific training prior to this time serves no useful function in the long run.

It was in such a context that the "hands off" doctrine of parental non-involvement arose. In brief, the school's program was thought to encompass the major teachable developmental tasks, and moreover these were scheduled in school according to the emergence of the child's natural "readiness" to undertake them, so that instructional efforts on the part of parents could only be regarded as unwanted meddling.

During the past two decades the embryological doctrine has suffered sharp reverses. Speculations have been abroad in psychological circles for some time, to the effect that human cognitive development might reach unprecedented heights if the program for stimulation was both sufficiently ingenious and was initiated at an early point in the child's life. Another widely held conviction is that the educational malleability of the mind decreases with age, so that the early years become critical.

These developments and speculations, widely disseminated in popular magazines, have not gone unnoticed by literate parents. One effect of this extensive popular writing on early education has been to legitimize the parent's desire to dabble in early pedagogy, as well as his actual undertakings in this direction. Another has been to create a clamor that the school itself should assume responsibility for the education of children from the earliest age at which they are able to profit from such instruction.

Many of the early-acquired skills are learned efficiently only when the child interacts on an individual basis with a confronting teacher. Hence arises the problem of financial cost. But even if this were economically feasible, plausible arguments can be advanced for having the mother act as the child's first teacher.

Thus the question of parental involvement in focused or structured instruction first arises as a practical consequence of current proposals for the stimulation of young children. For older pre-school children, parents are now doing a good deal in the way of

specific instruction even if the school does not completely accommodate its programs to this contribution, and are likely to continue to do so. Moreover, even as the child progresses beyond the elementary stages of the formal school system, certain skills -- e.g., the mastery of written expression -- can only be developed to a high degree through individual attention and direction, and it is now realized that the cooperation of a willing parent can greatly strengthen the school's impact in this area. It is clear, then, that the question of parental involvement in the child's formal schooling, to all intents and purposes now ignored or discouraged, is one which will have to be resolved in the very near future.

Quite aside from the possible direct benefits in terms of any student achievement which may follow from the use of parents in instructional roles, a good case can also be made that indirect benefits, again in achievement, will follow from the changes in parental attitude and the distribution of teacher effort which accompany the use of parent volunteers. There is a growing body of research which indicates that improved parental attitudes toward school programs may have marked positive effects on their children's school achievement. The Plowden Report, in England in 1967, for example, established that differences in parental attitudes account for far more of the variation in pupil achievement than do differences in home circumstances or differences in the quality of schools. The finding is commented on at length in Hedges' study (1972) Volunteer

Parental Assistance in Elementary Schools; in fact, the goal of improving parental attitudes through comprehensive volunteer programs is the prime objective in the operational model developed in his study. Incidentally, Maple Grove was one of the first three schools in which the model was implemented, and the first Ontario school in which a systematic evaluation of pupil achievement in volunteer programs was conducted.

The study referred to above adds an additional research finding to the question of the values of parental involvement programs. The researcher found that the presence of even one volunteer more than tripled the amount of adult time given to individual pupils, and that the teacher transferred 21 per cent of her time from supervisory and administrative tasks to the most important pedagogical functions during times when a volunteer's help is available. These important alterations in teachers' time allocations are further arguments for parental assistance, particularly in view of the fact that more attention to individual pupils and more time for planning, motivating, diagnosis and instruction are high on teachers' lists of professional concerns.

One of the objectives of the present monograph is to assist other educators in applying in their own schools some of the innovations implemented at Maple Grove. For this reason, it may be useful at this point to have access to the general operational model for parental assistance developed by Hedges, and to the hierarchy of

objectives underlying the model. These items appear in essentially their original form.

Objectives of the Parental Assistance Model

In the list that follows the first four objectives are deliberately ordered; the remainder, some of which are potential outcomes rather than definite objectives, are less fixed in their order. Probably it is unreasonable and unrealistic to cite, or at least to expect general agreement, for more than three or four major objectives.

1. The improving and enhancing of parental attitudes toward school programs, in view of their potential influence on pupil performance.
2. The improvement of communication between the home and the school and particularly the sharing of vital information about pupils.
3. The provision of additional adult help in the school, whether in clerical and technical help in classrooms, in direct assistance in the instructional sequence, in library supervision, in assistance with enrichment activities or individualized programs, or in other services to the school.
4. The improvement of parents' skills as "teachers" to improve this aspect of the parental role both in school and at home.
5. Improved understanding of the objectives and program of the school, and of the progress of the volunteer's child.
6. The understanding and acceptance by parents of innovations and other changes in school organization and curriculum.

7. The development of a positive basis for inviting parents to assist at home with their child's learning problems.

8. The identification of the total pool of human material resources of the community that could be used to improve school programs.

9. The development of improved community support, both political and financial, for school programs.

10. Greater commitment to learning as a life-long process, with particular application to increased awareness of the potential in preschool educational activities.

11. The provision of opportunities whereby volunteers can experience the fulfillment and satisfaction of service to society.

This list does not exhaust the array of potential objectives, outcomes and advantages of volunteer programs in schools. However, it provides for purposes of designing a model, an adequate set of objectives, and identifies some expected outcomes. Most of the outcomes, as the term suggests, will result from the program rather than influence its design.

The section that follows is an overview of the model in outline form. The sequence of the phases and steps is the proposed chronological order for implementation, although in practice some of the steps might well occupy a slightly different order within their respective phases. The presentation of the overview both in its major phases and on a chronological basis creates a few minor inconsistencies, mostly relating to evaluation as a continuous activity

and as a formal phase of implementation; the nature, but not the sequence of some sub-steps in the model, suggests that they might fit more logically under the headings given to other phases. The reader is encouraged to interpret apparent inconsistencies between major phases and subordinate sub-steps in terms of the basic chronological format of the model.

It is to be noted that the overview shows three interrelated levels of organization --phases, steps and sub-steps. Also mentioned are proposed materials at points where they apply. The initials S, P, T and V refer to the groups or persons who bear the main responsibility for initiating and/or implementing the step or sub-step, namely: Staff, i.e., principal and teachers, (S); Principal (P); Teachers (T); and Volunteers (V).

OUTLINE OF THE MODEL

PREPARATION PHASE

1. Analysis of readiness (P)
2. Identification of the major needs of the school (S)
3. Identification of alternative solutions,
including volunteer assistance (S)
4. Discussion of potential of volunteer program
-- study information concerning existing practices (S)
-- add books, manuals to professional library (S)
-- visit established programs (optional) (S)

- gather information concerning objectives (S)
- 5. Decision to proceed with plan
 - reach general commitment (S)
 - identify participating staff members (S)
- 6. Agreement on objectives of program
 - set up order of priority of major objectives (S)
- 7. Identification of guidelines for long-range evaluation of program (S)
- 8. Preparation of list of initial tasks for volunteers (S)

RECRUITMENT PHASE

- 1. General information meeting with parents (optional)(S)
 - involve existing parent organization (optional) (S)
- 2. Decisions on recruitment policies
 - test policies against objectives (S)
 - decide on general types or pools of volunteer service (regular, on-call, talent bureau) (S)
- 3. Preparation of recruitment letter with attached questionnaire (P)
- 4. Organization of files of volunteers in each pool (P)
- 5. Evaluation of recruitment procedures
 - publish list of volunteers to staff (P)
 - assess success of procedure (S)
 - plan, if necessary, to enlarge initial pool by alternate recruiting procedure, e.g., telephone, interview, or home visit (P)

INDUCTION PHASE

- 1. Initial meeting with volunteers
 - explain objectives, advantages of plan (S)

- outline general procedures (P)
- answer major concerns of parents (S)
- discuss policies concerning assignment, responsibility, confidentiality, attendance procedures, etc. (P)
- 2. Assignment (or selection) of volunteers for each teacher or team (S)
- 3. Preparation of pupils for volunteer participation
 - establish role and responsibility of volunteers (T)
 - clarify discipline and procedures (T)
- 4. Preliminary visit(s) of volunteers to assigned areas (T,V)
 - discuss program, organization, supplies, etc. (T)
 - assign and discuss initial tasks (T)
 - discuss mutual concerns (T,V)
- 5. Initial volunteer service
 - supervise volunteer tasks (T)
 - set up procedures for openness of communication (T,V)
 - assess volunteer's activities (T,V)
 - repeat, alter, or add assignments (T)
 - provide training for tasks where necessary (S)
- 6. Information to authorities and public concerning initial phase of program (P)

MAINTENANCE PHASE

- 1. Subsequent regular participation by scheduled volunteers (V)

2. Procedures for "promoting" volunteers to more demanding tasks
 - assess ability and reliability of volunteer and needs of classroom (T)
 - determine and reflect interests of volunteer (T)
 - maintain open communication (T,V)
3. Planning of informal training sessions as required to carry out specific roles (remedial, audio-visual, library procedures, etc.) (S)
4. Procedures for dealing with major difficulties
 - maintain frank discussion of concerns, and revise tasks as required (T)
 - re-assign certain volunteers after consultation with staff (P)
 - recruit from on-call corps to fill in for emergency absenteeism (P,T)
5. Procedures for involving "on call" pool (a) as replacements; (b) for special periodic needs (P)
6. Procedures for classifying resources of "talent bureau" and making information available to staff (P)
 - plan general procedures for contact with resource volunteers (S)
 - consider use of a volunteer for contacts (S)
7. Attention to staff requests for additional regular assistance
 - conduct second "wave" of recruitment (P)
 - explore possibility of volunteers as recruiters (P)
 - assess possible transfer from other pools to regular pool (P)

EVALUATION PHASE

1. Development of evaluation procedures
 - reaffirm priority of objectives (S)
 - analyze effectiveness of daily evaluation and communication (S)
 - identify main criticisms and weaknesses (S)
2. Meeting of principal (or staff) and volunteers after initial implementation
 - establish purpose and suitable interval after initial meeting (P)
 - explore informally expressed attitudes and outcomes from parents' point of view (S,V)
 - discuss criticisms, suggestions, and questions from volunteers (S,V)
3. Assessment of outcomes of above meetings, and modification of procedures as merited (S)
4. Formal evaluation in keeping with priority of objectives (6 - 10 months)
 - assess attitudes of parents, teachers, pupils (S)
 - assess effectiveness of volunteer service on extension of help to teachers (S)
 - measure changes in teacher activity, e.g., time spent in various functions (taxonomy, observation schedule, and manual) (T)
 - measure changes in amount of time spent by adults with individual pupils (T)
 - record changes in extent of individual and group activities (T)
 - measure changes in amount of time pupils spend in major activities, e.g., oral reading (T)
 - assess effects of program on pupil performance (S)

5. Evaluation of the model (S)

EXTENSION PHASE

1. Revision of model in light of evaluation (P)
2. Analysis of need for special forms of coordination of program
 - assess additional administrative load (P)
 - consider relationship to existing parent groups (S)
 - consider use of one or more volunteers as coordinators (S)
 - assign specific coordination roles to staff (S)
3. Addition of subsequent groups of volunteers
 - assess need for additional help (S)
 - assess use made of on-call and "talent bureau" pools (S)
 - record other major changes (S)
4. Procedures for transferring certain learning activities to homes (optional)
 - organize group training sessions (S)
 - prepare or provide parents' manual (S)
 - hold problem sessions (S)
 - involve parents in evaluation of their work (S)
5. Extension of model to meet broader or more specific needs
 - assess potential for special education, individualized instruction, supervision to permit staff time for curriculum development, etc. (S)
6. Policies and procedures concerning visitors (teachers and others) wishing to observe the program

7. Development of basic organizational structure needed to maintain program into new school year without "re-starting" the model (S)
8. Consideration of formal recognition of volunteers' service (S)
9. Preparation of year-end report to board of education, press, parents and community (S)
 - consider value of having an oral report made to board by a committee (principal, teacher, volunteer parent) (S)
 - invite press to observe and describe program (P)
 - document major aspects of program for school records, to include samples of forms, materials and letters used during the introductory year (P)

All of the support documents mentioned in the description of the model are available from the OISE Niagara Centre.

Chapter IV: PARTICIPATION BY THE ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

In 1969, the Niagara Centre at St. Catharines was established by The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Its prime function was to stimulate innovation in the schools of the Niagara region; Maple Grove School wished for some academic stimulation. As a result, a complementary relationship which persists to the present day was born.

The first task undertaken was the documentation of the state of the Maple Grove program at that time. This was supplemented by a definition of the problems to be confronted and the formulation of a plan of action. This initial activity was completed by Floyd Robinson during the spring of 1969. He consulted with the school staff, drafted reports and met with the teachers in planning sessions. The result was the "Proposal for a Three-Year Project in Parental Involvement for Maple Grove School", a blueprint which required a series of adjustments as the school population changed.

During planning sessions, it was immediately apparent that the OISE consultant and the teachers were thinking along similar lines. The principal, Mrs. Edra Thompson, illustrates this commonality of thought:

'Mrs. Sybil Ali, my colleague, reacted to the galley copies (of the plan): 'What would Dr. Robinson's thoughts have been?''

'Dr. Robinson's reaction was, 'What does she mean? These are my thoughts!''

The Parents' Manual

A major accomplishment of this early stage was the compilation of a Parents' Manual. Primarily, as the teaching program evolved, it seemed advisable to help parents understand what was really happening to their children. As procedures change, it is easy to lose one's perspective of the program. It was especially important to the Maple Grove situation because of the fluctuations in student body as the Clinton amalgamated board bussed pupils to reduce the grade range in its six small schools. For many parents, this would be their first acquaintance with the Maple Grove program.

In the Parents' Manual, the nature of the Maple Grove program in the Language Arts and in Arithmetic is described in relation to the major instructional aims, and samples of pupil activities are related to these aims. A comprehensive picture of each program is presented in two outline charts so that relationships between elements are readily apparent. (The outline for Arithmetic is included as Appendix A.)

The manual was designed to do more than simply describe the school program, however. In fact, only one-third of the publication deals with the descriptive aspects. The bulk of the manual consists of suggested activities for parents to employ with their children to complement the work of the teachers. The activities include both games to play with children and the utilization of everyday events (e.g., setting the table) to promote the attainment of the broad aims of the Maple Grove programs in Language Arts and

Arithmetic. To facilitate the use of the manual, teachers employ the Report of Student Activities forms. On the forms, teachers indicate pupil performance on particular topics of the language or of the arithmetic program. This is followed by specific suggestions for parental help to the child. In order to monitor the use of the manual, a "Log of Parent Teaching Activities" was constructed. On this form, the parent can record the activities pursued and the time spent in interaction with the child, together with any comments. Sample pages from the manual (Appendix B), copies of the student report forms (Appendix C) and a sample log (Appendix D) are included in this monograph.

The use of the manual was not presented as a mandatory activity, of course. The school cannot legislate parental concern for and involvement in the child's school life. When the manuals were distributed in January, 1970, twenty-five of sixty homes used them. Parents logged their activities, returning the log sheets when filled, or contacted the school if they wished to discuss some aspect of their activity.

Floyd Robinson's comments offer a preliminary evaluation of the effectiveness of the manual:

We believe that the production of the Parents' Manual was a very worthwhile undertaking, and that it did indeed facilitate constructive interaction between parent and teacher. As the responses to an anonymous questionnaire indicated, the vast majority of parents found the Manual easy to read and the directions easy to follow, and believed that this document gave them a much better understanding of what the child actually does in school than the much less formal descriptions which are normally provided. It is also clear from the present study

that a system of simple communication and reporting can be developed which does not encroach heavily on the teacher's time. In the present study, the teacher simply noted on a standard Report of Student Activities form the code letter for the exercises which might be most profitably undertaken at home. Similarly, after working with the child, the parent simply noted what exercises had been undertaken and, if so disposed, made comments on the outcome.

The Manual also proved valuable to volunteers who later came into the school on a regular basis to assist the teacher in a variety of teaching functions. Again, the teacher merely had to indicate by a code name the type of teaching activity she wanted undertaken, rather than laboriously writing it out or explaining it verbally to the volunteer. In brief, it is our impression, based upon the Maple Grove study and our survey of the use of volunteers in the school, that other schools would profit from the preparation of such a document in order to use their volunteer help effectively.

Novel Curriculum Try-Outs

The happy working relationship between the school and Niagara Centre made Maple Grove an ideal school in which to try out a number of new curriculum ideas and materials. In the course of developing a comprehensive thinking program for elementary school children, the officers of the Centre explored the abilities of primary pupils to classify objects; to establish order in size, time, etc.; to identify factors which must be controlled in doing experiments; to employ elementary concepts of ratio and proportion; and to utilize questions efficiently. These investigations acted, in turn, as a stimulus to the Maple Grove program.

Establishing the Mini-School

The idea of starting a class of preschool children, with parents as instructors, and with guidance, direction and supervision by

the school staff and the officers of the Centre received its early encouragement from Floyd Robinson. Throughout the two years in which the mini-school has operated, Niagara Centre has continued to provide instruction for the parents involved in it. A more detailed description of the mini-school is found in Chapter VI.

Kindergarten Evaluation Study

A major contribution of Niagara Centre was a comprehensive evaluation of the kindergarten program. The results of this study are reported in detail in Chapter VII.

Taken over all, the function of the advisors from the Niagara Centre was to enhance the flexible, pupil-focused curriculum at Maple Grove School principally by refining the kind and increasing the amount of parent involvement in school program through stimulating and increasing the confidence of the staff.

Chapter V: THE MAPLE GROVE PROGRAM: THE BASIC CURRICULUM

There are three major strands which interweave to form the Maple Grove story. There is the basic school program which bears many resemblances to the British primary school approach; there is the high degree of parent involvement in school activities, which may be considered an updating of the original school pattern established during pioneer days; and there is the story of the mini-groups which were established in response to a stated community need. All three must be charted if one is to gain a true understanding of the unique characteristics of Maple Grove School.

The underlying philosophy of the basic Maple Grove curriculum is best reflected in a statement by its principal:

Teaching from year to year, it sometimes seems that much of the child's school learning is irrelevant to his "real" life. Nagging the teacher is the recurring question, "Why is it that a child learns the important things outside the school?"

I felt compelled to tie school into a more vital spot in a child's life. After all, a student spends the best waking hours of his best learning years in the classroom. It seemed a crime to fritter away this prime time. School should be providing him with the tools for LIVING, not for just existence. School work should be the stuff that life and dreams are made of. It should push back the limits of man's understanding and broaden his horizons. This seemed pretty heady stuff for kindergarten and Grade 1 children but I had come to respect their uncluttered, unfettered minds. It seemed to me that as students progressed through our educational system they became progressively more turned off until in Teachers' College you could almost hear the click as university grads turned off their minds and waited passively for the lesson to begin.

Living and Learning on page 21 refers to Whitehead, the great British philosopher, as saying, "All students must have before them AN HABITUAL VISION OF GREATNESS." How could this be in a place where a child could be continually graded below average, where he could be kept in after school to improve his printing -- which disintegrated with tired muscles and frustrations, where he could be required to spend a weekend writing out a spelling mistake 500 times? Before him constantly was an habitual nightmare of failure.

A child came to Maple Grove after failing kindergarten. It took over a year before he said one day, "Me no fool."

I have been asked, "What is your top priority goal in designing your program?" It is a positive self-image for each child. If a child likes himself he'll know how to like others. If a child believes in himself he can tackle any problem and chances are he will succeed. If a child believes he cannot do it, he is beaten before he starts.

Pearl Buck quotes a motto above the doorway to a school for retarded children: "Happiness first and all else follows." I believe that once a child's mind is open and fertile for learning, learning takes place. I think that the only time learning does not take place or negative learning occurs is when we stop or distort it, by creating in the child inhibitions and withdrawals from learning. This does not mean that I believe a mind can go undisciplined and unbridled. A teacher must never abdicate her position of responsibility to guide and pace and poke where necessary.

What is my goal? It is to help children learn "at the threshold of their minds." How can I tell when I am achieving this? Aside from asking OISE to conduct tests, I can only look at the children and judge what I see. This is what I want to see: A CHILD WITH AN ENQUIRING MIND, A CHILD WHO IS SELF-RELIANT AND INDEPENDENT, CAPABLE OF ORGANIZATION OF HIS THOUGHTS, CAPABLE OF SELF-MOTIVATION, PURPOSEFUL IN HIS BEHAVIOUR, UNAFRAID AND NATURALLY HONEST, CONSIDERATE AND RESPECTFUL OF OTHERS, SELF-CONTROLLED, SELF-CONFIDENT, SECURE WITHIN HIMSELF, FULL OF LIFE. A CHILD WHO LOOKS ON TEACHERS AND PARENTS AS RESOURCE PEOPLE AND FRIENDS.

During 1970-71, OISE's research assistant questioned teachers

and children extensively concerning the program and purposes of the school. Here are some of the questions and answers.

Explain, if possible, what the various aspects of the program are aimed at achieving.

The total program is aimed at achieving self-reliance in the children, an ability to think, to organize THEIR OWN program, to program themselves. It is important to provide a setting where a child must do some of his own thinking, where he must take the responsibility for his own learning, where he must organize, because this is more important to a growing individual than learning to follow instructions and simply doing what the teacher says. Teachers must not always do the thinking for the student. School is a place where he should be learning to organize his own thoughts. Competition is reduced as much as possible to help a child to become aware of himself and of his own potential, to develop a positive self-image.

Explain how the teacher's role, the parent's role, and the child's role are integrated to achieve the learning situation that exists in your school.

(a) As far as the teacher's role is concerned --the teacher is looked on as a resource person, as an adult who can advise and pace. If a child is not working to capacity then it is up to the teacher to read that child and to try to judge with some kind of accuracy what his capabilities are, and pace what he should be trying to do. For this reason, a teacher has to be sure that she allows that child

enough scope to show what he is capable of doing. When a teacher constantly lays on the program, there is no way that she can read a child, that she can know what that child is capable of doing. So, the teacher must first of all read the youngster, so she knows what kind of raw material she has to work with, and then she must be sure that the child is working at a level that is commensurate with his capabilities.

(b) The parent's role is similar to that of the teacher, but as far as the school work is concerned, the teacher must be the one who does the overall planning while the parent carries out what the teacher suggests. This should in no way indicate that the teacher knows it all and the parent knows nothing as far as the school program and academic work is concerned. Teachers are constantly asking the parents for feedback and saying, "Do you find such-and-such with the youngster here?" or "Send me a note," or "Let me know how you think he's doing." When the parent is using the manual, he is asked to send back comments on how the child is working at the particular level suggested by the teacher. When the teacher and the parent work in conjunction, then the child stands to gain because they consolidate each other instead of working against each other -- it makes it a much more integrated situation for the child. There isn't the chance of a child saying to a parent, "You don't know, because that's not what the teacher says."

(c) As for the child's role in this -- he has to assume, first of all, in his own mind, responsibility for his own learning. He

must feel that it's up to him. The teacher will sometimes say to a child, "You are the one who needs to learn some of this. It isn't going to make any difference to me ten years from now whether you've learned how to read or do numbers, but it's going to make a tremendous difference to you, and so you have to make up your mind how important it is and how hard you're going to work at it." The responsibility for learning must be felt within the child, and then, when he needs help, he comes to the adult (the teacher or the parent) to get it. But the first and original effort has to come from the child. This does not mean a teacher just allows him to float, but until the child's ignition is turned on even the most perfect program can be completely ineffective.

Every once in a while there is a discussion, either with one or more children or with the whole group, on just why they come to school -- why come to school, why learn, what's important about it, and if it is important why it's worth working at. The teachers try constantly to convince both students and themselves that what they are doing is important and worthwhile to them.

Explain How Behavior Incidents are Handled and the Purpose Behind It

When children enter our kindergarten, from the very beginning they look upon the situation as a natural kind of thing. For instance, there is no toilet drill -- if the child must go to the toilet, he goes. They all know where the toilet is -- if a new child doesn't know, an older child is sent off with him to explain the ropes. There are very few accidents because a child feels free

to go when he has to and he comes back when he's ready and picks up his work and carries on.

If the children get into a fracas out in the school yard, for instance, and one comes up and tattles on another, the tattler is told, "Go and get so-and-so that you say has done this thing and bring him in." So the two of them come together and the two of them must explain what happened, and then very often they come up with the solution themselves. Throwing it back at them forces them to handle and decide on their own behaviour and the consequences of their own behaviour. If a child in the classroom is making a lot of racket, sometimes one child will simply get up and sit some place else where it's quieter. One teacher had a little table out in the cloak-room, sometimes for isolation -- to isolate the child who was causing the ruckus -- but then sometimes a child, one little fellow in particular, would say, "So-and-so's bugging me -- I'm going to work by myself in the cloakroom." And some learned that they could work better by themselves, in a corner, where they didn't see so much or hear so much that was going on, and they learned to isolate and discipline themselves. So, even though the cloak-room was used as an isolation spot, it wasn't just considered "the bad place" -- children realized that when they went out there they could often simmer down, and so they would sometimes take themselves out there on their own, because they found it was easier to be alone. In another case a little fellow who is just naturally a rambunctious

child, one day poked a little guy in the stomach. The little guy who was poked didn't like it very well and went to the teacher with tears in his eyes. He was sent to get Larry. The teacher said, "You tell Larry what happened and how it felt." Scott looked at Larry with tears in his eyes and he said, "It felt nasty to be hit in the stomach." At that, Larry felt very silly for what he'd done and he rubbed Scott's tummy and said, "I wouldn't want to hurt your little tummy", and hence indicated or communicated to Scott that he really wasn't as nasty as he seemed, and they were friends. If the teacher had simply disciplined Larry, I think she would have been teaching Scott just to tattletale and wouldn't have given him the pleasure and the satisfaction and the right, almost, of knowing how Larry truly felt. So in all discipline and in all handling of behaviour, the teachers throw it back to the children just as much as they can, and help them resolve the problems.

In a flexible program many subject divisions disappear. However, to illustrate the range of activities and the flavour of the program, an example representing each of the major subject areas is briefly outlined in the words of the teacher.

Science

Warren brought a clutch of feathers to school. What kind were they - Owl? Pheasant? I bet him that they were the small wing feathers of a pheasant. Warren looked in the World Book. They could be from an owl or pheasant. He went through all the filmstrips of birds. Still he wasn't sure. "Why not go to the taxidermist --

Bradley's dad?" So Warren and a cluster of interested friends piled into a volunteer's car and went to see the taxidermist who was ready and waiting. The feathers matched exactly -- a beautiful stuffed pheasant in the taxidermist's display. Warren came back bursting with information. He explained in minute detail -- the feathers were from the breast. He corrected my erroneous assumption. We all learned. Interest carried on in some youngsters for over a week. Warren returned to the World Book and drew a snowy owl -- a beautiful detailed reproduction 12 inches high with its myriad tiny feathers painstakingly outlined.

Similarly Richard picked up a brilliant orange oriole from along the highway on his way to school. It must have glanced off a car because there were no outward signs but it was very dead. It went to the taxidermist.

I played the autoharp as accompaniment to a sing-song. Children strummed its strings. It led into a discussion of sound vibrations, experiments with voice vibrations on balloons, and the plinking of tuning forks over a dish of water.

Elizabeth Jarvis, Primary Consultant, brought in some Goat's Beard one June day. The next morning Richard found some of these golden pompoms growing in the ditch. In the morning sun and wet dew a group of us hiked down the highway and each picked a handful of Goat's Beard, which we took back to school for examination.

Another day Mrs. Jarvis brought in a bright red and yellow tulip. It was perfumed, and one of the largest tulips I have ever seen.

We had just finished a story from the Canadian collection Nunny Bag, called "The Taste of Spring." In it a little boy ate a crocus, and in reply to his grandmother's query said, "It tastes like spring." A bright little voice piped up, "I wonder what the tulip tastes like." So we tasted. The stem was sweet. Then they tasted a narcissus and they told me I had a treat in store. Admidst snickering and intrigue I tasted. It was as bitter as gall. We had a lesson about poisonous plants. We were reminded of the time hikers brought back twigs of lovely white berries one fall - poison ivy!

Riding our go-carts down a slight incline in the schoolyard produced an involved discussion on gravity.

There is a wealth of science subjects that could keep us busy in Maple Grove kindergarten until old age sets in. Frogs in our pond, only a fifteen-minute hike from school, have been lifted to a makeshift home in a tub in the schoolyard outfitted with rocks and pond water. We learned that frogs and frog eggs have a fishy smell when Jamie backed up too far and sat in the tub. We had to dry his pants on the maypole and when he put them back on they reeked with an undeniable fishy odour. Proof of the life cycle of a frog.

When big snowflakes fell children ran for the magnifying glass, and in warmer months they roamed the schoolyard, magnifying glass in hand, stalking specimens live or dead.

Larry brought bantam eggs. Hank Hedges and Richard brought incubators. When the chicks hatched, children took them home. One

chick, now a year old, will go down to posterity as "Mr. Hedges", the name chosen by its youthful owner. When an incubator went cold the caretaker brought in Biddle, her setting hen.

Flopsy is our four-year old beautiful big white rabbit who has the run of the school. He has trained himself to a newspaper. At night and on the weekends he has his own private apartment in the basement. He had a mate who gave birth to twenty-two babies before she gave up the struggle and died. Her lovely babies were born at the school, and then gradually taken home by children. Children have learned to appreciate Flopsy as the character he is. He does amazingly little damage but we all know that he is curious and will sniff anything strange -- like the shiny new telephone wire that he sniffed and chopped in two, and the back of Dr. Robinson's shoe, from which he took a healthy bite!

We have had a golden hamster bred and brought to school by David. She lived her two-year life span and has been replaced by George, a silver hamster who hated Jimmy the Gerbil and ate two toes from two of Jimmy's feet. Jimmy broke a tooth and, as rodents will, almost died because the opposing tooth grew to such a length that it was cutting his head to pieces. We snipped off the offending tooth. Jimmy finally did die at the age of three and was buried under a cross in the schoolyard. There is also Guinea the little guinea pig. No wonder we have been asked whether we run a school or a zoo.

Mathematics

As our manual suggests we do quite an extensive amount of paper-work in mathematics. We also make practical applications wherever possible.

One child lived on a mink farm. He was determined to earn money selling mink and learned in his first year of school to add three column figures and calculate profits in dollars and cents.

Children ran races in the schoolyard. They used the stopwatch to time the runners. Sometimes they timed themselves when they read.

Reading

Children read in one-to-one situations to teacher or parent, or another child. They begin by reading their own word cards which have been printed by the teacher. The words have come from the children -- from their conversation, pictures or stories. Like Sylvia Ashton-Warner's Key Vocabulary, the words are first known to the child, then seen in print. (It is a reverse process from teaching flashcard words lifted from controlled vocabulary primers. Frequently in this case, the child sees the word in print first, then learns its meaning.)

Children may choose what book they wish to read. We have several basal reader series -- not a class set of any. There are plenty of library books. Sometimes a child will choose a book that seems too difficult. Here the teacher exercises discretion and paces the youngster. Sometimes the child will agree that an easier book would be preferable, but sometimes the child persists and in

some of these cases it is best, in fact inevitable, to allow him to pursue his course even if the teacher's head almost aches from his effort. Some children have to work right on the edge of difficulty. They seem to learn best if they are pushing themselves right at the peak of their ability. So long as discouragement does not set in they are allowed to read on.

Phonics are stressed -- on an individual basis and sometimes in a group. Dictionary skills are developed.

Children often teach children. In the atmosphere of cooperation it could be an adult or child listening to a reader. The reader may read once a day, or as often as he wants if he is keen. He may read one page or two pages or as many pages as time and listener allow.

One mother complained that her kindergarten child would rather read than sleep and had been caught under her bed with a flashlight reading in the small hours of the morning.

Music

Sometimes everyone sings around the piano -- all who wish to join the sing-song. Those who do not wish to be part of the group work at something else, somewhere else in the building, with supervision.

On warm days singers may go outside with the autoharp.

The best music time was with a folksinger and his banjo. Children sang with him for over an hour and even though it was lunchtime and some were so exhausted they were almost falling asleep, they

begged him not to stop. The folksinger returned a number of times; each was a unique experience.

Social Studies

Mrs. Ali is from Trinidad. Maple Grove twinned with a school there and exchanged pictures, maple sugar for cocoanut candy, stories and taped songs.

A French Canadian family was part of the school. The mother taught crafts and French. Pupils taught her English.

Children have flown to Germany and shared their experiences with classmates.

One child spent a month in Florida. The children made a folder of the post cards he sent to the school.

Three Indians from the Six Nations Reservation taught the children about the Iroquois Nation -- its Longhouse religion, its festivals (including the Maple Sap Festival) and their dances. Chief Grey Cloud built a wigwam in the schoolyard. He and Mrs. Pierce-sky and a young boy, Running Deer, came to the school several times -- joining us in a big Open House one night. Children met soft-spoken, attractive, warm, real people -- a far cry from the cowboys and Indians of T.V.

The development of the flexible Maple Grove program can be credited to many factors. Two basic ones are the nature of the physical environment and the characteristics of the staff.

Physical Setting

The school house lends itself to the Maple Grove "way of life". The building has nooks and crannies for private things, or friendly games or exchanges to be shared on a small scale. In addition to two classrooms on the main floor, there is a basement room, dignified by its designation Phys. Ed. Room. That is the room for noisy things and big activity. Another room on the far side of the furnace room is the audio-visual room. Upstairs on the second floor is a long room which originally served as a Home Economics Room. It contains a stove, refrigerator, sink, iron and ironing board, doll centre and library centre. It is a catch-all. Here maple sap has been boiled to syrup, grapes transformed to delicious grape jelly, Aunt Mary's hand cookies have been baked and a gingerbread house pasted together with icing.

Surrounding the school is a large playground. Only two of the original grove of maples remain. An evergreen with low-slung branches has sheltered children feeling a little out of sorts. It has been called the sulking tree. It also shelters the bird feeder.

There are swings, monkey bars, a maypole swing, sandboxes, a ball diamond and a storehouse containing boards and trestles that a dad donated from a lumber company. These old planks have been transformed into ships. With the addition of discarded tires for hatches they were turned into submarines. Planks laid across saw-horses have become teeter-totters. Children can be anything the imagination conjures up. The teachers highly recommend old planks and saw-horses for every primary schoolyard.

The school looks up to the Escarpment - a natural museum. The Bruce Trail is a stone's throw from the door.

Teacher Attitudes

In such a small setting teachers could clash unmercifully if they subscribed to opposing philosophies. Fortunately, those at Maple Grove belong pretty much to the same school of thought. They have not, however, tried to force anything down each others' throats. They have worked independently, retaining their personal and individual integrity. It has been surprising how closely they have paralleled each other, often sharing observations which had been considered unique, only to find the others had experienced the same and come to similar conclusions. By respecting the validity of each others' experiences each actually tested her own. Each handled her own parent involvement; it can not be imposed on anyone -- parent, child or teacher. Even though each assumed responsibility for her own, the program is not fragmented.

Chapter VI: THE MAPLE GROVE PROGRAM: PARENT INVOLVEMENT

It is within the context of the basic school program described in Chapter V that the use of parental assistance evolved. Parent involvement grew out of observation visits by parents to the classroom. It seemed only natural to ask the parent to perform some simple task such as asking her to hear a pupil read his story. It was a short step to the more extensive use of parents to facilitate varied programming in a school with a high pupil-teacher ratio. Finally, the systematic program to develop and utilize parent volunteers was initiated under the direction of the Niagara Centre.

Parents have a right to share in the educational process. The conviction of the Maple Grove staff has always been that some schools rob parents of the thrill of their children's learning. There is a thrill. That's what keeps teachers teaching. It is especially apparent in kindergarten that parents yearn to remain a part of their child's learning experience. It seemed irresponsible to cut them off.

To find a starting point for each child, parents have an irreplaceable role to play. Who else can provide the history of the years one to five? While a child moves from teacher to teacher he usually remains with the same parents. They are stuck with him and are more truly concerned than a teacher who can get rid of him at the end of the year, or even before if he is sufficiently "emotionally disturbed". Parents MUST be involved, to provide essential

information to the teacher, to make up an effective team of child-parent-teacher. This is the heart of parent involvement. To do "joe jobs" and provide teacher assistance is no more than a welcome adjunct. Parent Involvement cannot live by "joe jobs" alone.

Instead, by working with pupils, parents catch the infectious thrill associated with a child's learning, whether the hurdle they have helped him clear is big or small. The teachers find parents inquiring about some child that they had helped. "How is John doing? He was trying so hard." Parents experience the impelling pull back to the classroom to see how a certain child has fared. It is not idle curiosity. It is a bona fide concern, a thrill at the child's accomplishment.

Recruiting the Parent

Effective recruitment is essential to a successful parent involvement program. The Maple Grove procedure appears to work well. A form is sent to each home in August (Appendix E). The paraprofessional tabulates the returns and organizes the parent schedule. It appears that there is a very definite role for a paraprofessional. She is a paid, permanent staff member. Her attendance is regular and not contingent on home emergencies. A program must not lean on volunteers so heavily that it falls apart if the volunteer fails to show up. A paraprofessional's attendance is reliable. She organizes the volunteer schedule and fills in the gap if the parent has to absent herself. The paraprofessional obviates the need for a supply

teacher in the absence of the regular classroom teacher. She knows the program so well, being a permanent part of it, that there is literally no disruption. The Educational Resource Technician (E.R.T. as a graduate of Niagara College is called), organizes audio-visual equipment and schedules films. She is valuable jack-of-all-trades who prefers to be master of none --she leaves that to the teacher.

Although it is a cooperative team approach, in the final division of responsibilities the teacher must assume the guidance role. Parent Involvement reaches its ultimate when teacher and parent keep all lines of communication open and all systems "go". The E.R.T. keeps the mechanism running smoothly.

The teachers look on parents as they look on themselves, on their friends, on other teachers and on children; they too have their strengths and their weaknesses. Teachers look for their strengths and capitalize on them. They have yet to find someone with nothing to offer. It may be that they first have to instil confidence, sweep away mistrust and misgivings and till up the soil a little bit. After all, the school for generations now has been saying, "Hands off!" Some parents had a pretty bad time as students and naturally bring with them the ingrained resentments drummed into their emotions over those stultifying years. Keeping in mind that the reason for parent involvement is an improved learning climate for their children, they have something in common. This is the launching pad. No longer is it a case of the teacher being on

one side of the fence, and ALWAYS right, with the parent on the other side of the fence, and ALWAYS wrong, and the child in the middle being torn apart.

Laying the Groundwork: Briefing the Volunteer

Before a parent is scheduled to help, the school should know enough about her to put her where she will do the most good. The principal assesses the parent and her child to ascertain the functions to be put before her to best help both the parent and the school.

When the parent arrives at the door, the teacher tells her what needs to be done. Teachers don't have parents come if they don't feel the need because parents are busy people too and cannot be blamed if they withdraw from a waste of time. Usually the teacher is in the midst of something that welcomes bailing out, so she hands out a job and tries to keep the parent involved and busy and convinced that she is indispensable. To avoid the pitfall of having to tell the parent what to do every five minutes, and thus creating for herself just one more chore more easily done herself, the teacher briefs the parent before she starts, at some convenient time, alone or in the company of some other mothers. Tacked to the walls of the various rooms are the ground rules for each area. The children know them too and help new volunteers through the ropes. If a person cannot control a group, she is sent only one child. If a parent seems ineffective she is kept in the classroom with the teacher until enough of the basic underlying rules have rubbed off.

If a parent is good at crafts she may take a small group. If she feels inept at crafts she may listen to a child read. The teacher becomes a master juggler, or ring master. It becomes a study in human dynamics.

When the emphasis is on "helping" each other the idea of "trying to get away with something" seems incongruous even to a child. It seldom happens that a situation gets out of control but if it does the teacher doesn't leave the parent floundering. The adult invariably realizes only too poignantly when the reins have been wrested from him by the youngsters. He may be embarrassed but helpless. The teacher sympathizes. "It happens to me too. Let's see what we can do about it." They try to diagnose what has gone wrong, change the elements that need to be changed and leave the parent with conditions she can handle. The teacher fosters the feeling that "we" are doing a job together and avoid, as much as possible, parents feeling put on the spot or abandoned. Like anyone else, they must not feel that they have failed or let the school down.

The teacher makes mental notes and discusses with parents things that happened during their sessions with pupils. The teacher tries as much as possible to have them leave with the feeling, "It was good to have been here. I was needed. I did a job. I made a contribution. I learned. I am gratified."

And within herself, the teacher is genuinely convinced also that it was good.

Good can often be made better and many means are used to foster improvement. When the teacher notices that a child appears concerned about reading to a certain parent, she alerts herself to the reasons. She may suggest, and not just when a problem presents itself, that reading sessions be taped. Later, she may listen, and tape her own suggestions for the parent to hear next time around.

The responsibility for the parent involvement program running effectively rests squarely on the teacher. She must say, "Do this", initially, and all the way along, so that parents and children look to the teacher for guidance. The stock salutation becomes, "What shall I do today -- the same as last week?"

Especially when children go with a parent on an excursion, the teacher may remind them, "Mrs. Frayne is in charge. You help her." They usually do.

What Volunteers Do

What do parent volunteers do? Almost everything a teacher does, with the exception of long range planning and taking responsibility for the school "in toto". Do they teach? Of course they do, just as teachers sometimes do supportive work. It is difficult to categorize. If a job needs to be done, it's done by the person at hand. These jobs parents have done with appropriate guidance from the teacher and the manual:

- listened to reading;

- listened to counting;

They become independent readily and help each other when necessary. This does not mean that teacher and parent will not help a little fellow in dire distress, but it has never presented sufficient problem to warrant designating a helper to that particular type of job. Children tidy up after themselves, put chairs up at the end of the day and take them down in the morning. So children share "joe jobs" too. It has been a venture in cooperation.

Teacher-Parent Consultation

To have parents come on one specified interview day and sit on chairs in the hall waiting their turns like in a barbershop or doctor's office didn't seem conducive to fostering "involved" attitudes. Instead the following have been stressed:

(1) Phoning whenever something that needed it arose. The teachers don't mind phone calls at home, perhaps because they have never received many. They have a policy of open lines.

(2) Sending notes to keep teachers informed of anything pertinent -- a morning "grump", a 3-year-old suddenly reading her brother's name Vic in a service station sign, a need for medical tests or a tonsillectomy. Daily swapping of news made life in the classroom more legitimate and less cut off from the real world of the child.

(3) Spending at least one session in the classroom so teachers could point to learning in action and lock the parents into the process. This proved so much more vital than paper report cards

that there was nearly 100% response. Working parents often took time off to come in. "My son has been begging me to come. Now I understand what he's talking about."

(4) Working on schedule if possible. In the regular coming and going of mothers working in the school a running commentary developed and thoughts were exchanged in an informal, easy fashion. "Oh, by the way, have you noticed that Danny doesn't want to read lately?"

"Not really, but I'll make a point of it." This was less time consuming, and so much less disruptive than when problems were stashed away and the whole bussing system reorganized for that one or two or three days set aside for parent interviews. It was less exhausting and far more relevant because teachers were not discussing history, they were reporting the present events and problems.

(5) Making an appointment outside school hours. This could be at noon, after 3:30, or in the evening. It could be at school or at the child's home. The most common appointment was after school, at Maple Grove, so the whole family could attend.

(6) Holding approximately three Open Houses a year from 7.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. for the purpose of discussing and examining the children's work. The first was held after the grapes were harvested in late October and early November. A school has to reflect its community and if parents were to come teachers had to plan the functions at times when they were free. The format of the first

meeting was usually a formal "sit-down" hour in order to introduce teachers and program to the new crop of parents. Staff answered questions, introduced Floyd Robinson and David Brison of The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education on one occasion, and stressed whatever seemed pertinent to the group as a whole. The rest of the evening was directed toward children, their folders and notebooks. The two subsequent Open Houses in the year were usually strictly come-and-go. It obviated the need for a baby sitter. Both mom and dad could come with brothers and sisters. If little ones became restless they could go outside with older siblings or go home at any time. The Maple Grove child took pride in showing his work and school to those who meant most to him. He was included in discussions with his teacher -- no fear of secret intrigue between parents and teacher against him. He didn't have to ask in fear and trembling, "What did the teacher say?" He knew. Whose business is it anyway?

(7) Calling special meetings for those interested in such things as the Parent Manual study and Mini-Groups. Hank Hedges and Floyd Robinson met with parents concerning an experiment carried out with Grade one children.

(8) Setting aside time for training of parents for their involvement. This has been at a minimum because it seemed to work itself into the other times. "Informality" was the password. Teachers have not stressed the "Parent Involvement Program" in a formalized sense so much as they have emphasized homes and school getting

to know and to help each other. When philosophies and hearts had been set straight, the head followed and worked out the details.

Staff Reactions

How does the staff of Maple Grove feel about the presence of parents in so many aspects of the school program? Perhaps this is best reflected in the words of a staff member:

My evaluation is subjective - OISE's more objective evaluation follows. Our individualized approach has been a developmental one. I originally taught in a more formalized manner. Of course, I feel that our present program is an improvement on six years ago. If I were to face a class again without any assistants I would approach it as I do now. There is no refuting that volunteer helpers aid immeasurably. Individualized teaching and parent involvement go hand in hand.

In answer to the question, "Are parents capable of doing the job?" I ask, "Who else?" By their very act of being parents the job is theirs, and Maple Grove's Parent Involvement is an extension of their parental responsibilities. Success or failure hinges on the teacher's handling of the whole situation.

In answer to the question, "Are teachers capable of handling the job?" I would answer "Yes". But before they can, they must BELIEVE that the atmosphere for learning for the children can be enhanced by involving parents. They must assess the dimensions of the job and grow into them. A teacher cannot hope for satisfaction or effectiveness if her reason for becoming involved with parents is that the principal said she should, or if she clings to the belief that it really is better if parents keep hands off, or if her emphasis is on program rather than on the development of children. The philosophy behind involving parents must be compatible with the teacher's philosophy of teaching. Then the teacher must possess sufficient aplomb to put it across. It may require growth in this direction. It may take time and experience and assurance, and assistance from staff who are just a step or two ahead and assistance from understanding parents. When a teacher lets down her defences it is amazing how parents can come to the rescue.

Parent Reactions

Some of the following quotations are from signed letters, some are from anonymous forms provided by OISE.

.....My own child would ask to work with the orange book (the Manual) and there was no forcing. The main advantage was to me, knowing what my child was doing and helping me to help him in the proper way.....I was shocked to see the progress. Especially in the reading.....The advantages would be: That a child would learn the reasons for learning, rather than being told to learn something they don't understand. Better mutual understanding between parent and teacher of the child's personality. Disadvantages: Parent must have time for this type of study.

.....There are many advantages to the child and parent in this type of parental involvement -- Better understanding of program, better understanding of one's child, etc., etc., ... only disadvantage would be perhaps it is idealistic to expect all parents to spend the time to consistently help child..... The advantages would be a closer child-parent relationship with the school work. It lets you get an idea of what your child is capable of doing and how to progress without upsetting the child. The disadvantages: If a parent tried to have the child do this (work in the manual) against his will the child would soon dislike school and home too, as the child does have moods where they do not want extra work so to speak.

.....I believe this type of involvement is good, because it enables the parent to help a child intelligently when he reaches out for help, but I do not think a parent should be made to feel duty-bound to plunk a child down with the "orange book". Nor do I think parents should make such a god out of education that they fail to provide the emotional and spiritual climate that will enable the child to grow into a morally, responsible person, able to put to positive use what he learns at school.

A Typical Day

The timetable for a typical day presents a graphic picture of the Maple Grove program in action. Here it is through the eyes of the school staff.

9.00 a.m.: Usually we sit together in a group "to get organized." This is our bring and brag time, a sharing of experiences. Parents may already have taken their place in the upstairs room or elsewhere in the school. We indicate which child or children should go to work with the volunteer. We write in the child's notebook what is to be done. The youngster takes it to the parent. They work together while we carry on in the classroom. There could be as many as ten children with a volunteer. If a volunteer prefers fewer we send fewer. We control the numbers by a system of tickets. A child picks up a ticket as he goes out of the room, deposits it on its ledge when he returns, and the teacher knows she may send one more. The amount of time a child spends with a volunteer may vary from five to fifteen minutes. Most of our volunteers work in areas outside our classrooms so the large group is reduced in size, and consequently reduced in problems.

When we have accomplished what we set out to do in our organizational group I might say next, "Now we should each choose what work to do. John, what are you going to do first this morning?" I might ask each child and help him decide what he should undertake. As he decides he leaves the group and gets to work.

9.30 a.m.: By this time children are usually working individually and the teacher is circulating. The children know what is required of them. Kindergarten children do at least one piece of paperwork -- either a picture, or numbers, or a sentence story if they are capable.

Grade one children complete a picture and story, numbers, printing, and dictionary work which includes phonics. The actual hour and order in which this work is accomplished is left up to the child unless he leaves it until the last minute; then the teacher paces him. Interspersed with the above activities would be: reading to parents or teacher, looking at library books, filmstrips, movies, slides, using puzzles and other shelf material, playing in the doll centre, listening to a story, performing a play, working in a craft group, painting, researching in encyclopaedia, working out in the physical education room, listening to records, watching TV., going on a bus trip or hike -- a host of choices.

10:15 a.m.: We may take a fifteen to twenty minute break and go outside. If a child elects to remain inside and continue working he is so permitted. This happens frequently.

If it is particularly pleasant, warm weather and a parent is agreeable to staying outside all morning or afternoon, we have put a table and chair under the shade of a tree and this has been an area designated for a child to read to the parent or indulge in water or sand play, etc. When children are constructively occupied in the healthful outdoors, why force them inside? We use the out-of-doors whenever possible. During the first warm days of spring we might all take our work outdoors -- like a butterfly emerging from its winter cocoon or a woodchuck from hibernation.

In the winter we use the physical education room for a big

activity and usually do not go outside until noon. Zippers and boots and wet mitts and suits are just too much. But the Phys. Ed. Room is then in constant use. We do not all crush into it at the same time, and then leave it to stand empty the rest of the day. There might be eight children each spending fifteen minutes, or thereabouts, then returning one at a time to the classroom. Our ticket system provides for an acceptable constant shuttle service.

10:30 a.m.: Individualized work time continues as above.

11:00 a.m.: Singsong or story.

11:30 a.m.: Kindergarten goes home.
Regular work routine continues for Grade 1.

12:00 noon: Lunch time.

1:15 p.m.: Afternoon Kindergarten arrives.

Routines for afternoon are similar to the morning. Grade one children carry on with whatever remains to be done.

Recording - Individual Notebooks and Folders

The teacher checks a child's work before it is taken home or placed in his folder. Folders are kept at school and checked periodically by the teacher. Notebooks with a running record, and kept with the folder, provide a profile of the child's day to day progress. These notebooks consist of teacher instructions, observations jotted down at the time of happening, and parent comments. They are not anecdotal records laboriously composed at the end of a tiring day. They are a real, effective tool for teaching. Once in a while a child may add his observations too -- especially if one

child has listened to another read. Here is Shelley's (age 6) notation about Leslie Ferris (age 5): "Surprises - P 49 - 58, Mr. Leslie Ferris is having problems with come, and, Jill, having."

As often as possible the teacher checks through folders and notes her diagnoses in the notebooks. These become reminders to teacher and parent when the child sets himself to the task of learning at the next session. When passing information on to parents and subsequent teachers, notebooks are an invaluable record. Although the notebook is used by all three -- parent, teacher, child -- it is the child's responsibility to keep track of his own. Since folders and notebooks are kept on open shelves they are easily accessible to the teacher at any time.

The Mini-Group

Many factors account for the beginning of a preschool program, called the Mini-Group, at Maple Grove. Among these are the parental assistance program and the Parents' Manual, but no doubt the increasing general interest in early childhood education also influenced some of the parents to suggest ideas which could best be achieved through a preschool program. In particular, several of the volunteer mothers asked for suggestions like those in the Manual which would be applicable to younger children at home.

The basic purpose, then, of the Mini-Group was to suggest to parents ideas which they might work out at home to enrich their children's learning experiences. The Mini-Group probably was of

initial major benefit to the parents in helping them achieve this purpose, but no doubt the sessions were also helpful to the young children involved. Coming together periodically at the school acted as a stimulus both to parents and children, but this age group of children is not socially oriented so the majority of activity was still individual even while in the group setting.

In organizing the Mini-Group in its first year, a number of mothers were invited to a meeting at which they explored with the staff and with the officers from OISE some of the things the parents could do at school and at home to provide preschool children with experiences not likely to be encountered in the natural environment, and yet non-competitive with the school program into which the child would later be enrolled. The improvement of story-telling and questioning, learning to put things in order, playing games which required the use of classification skills, the identification of sizes, colours, shapes and textures, the manipulation of objects, simple planning, rhythmic games, simple dancing and body movement, group singing from children's records, listening to stories, viewing films and filmstrips, etc. were typical activities in the weekly or bi-weekly sessions.

Mothers continue to find the Mini-Group experiences helpful. When a child asks, "What is there to do?" the parent will, hopefully, be better equipped to guide. It is hoped that the Mini-Group will draw together the home and school, bringing the home atmosphere into

the school and making introduction to the school setting happy and easy.

On the day when the group meets at school, parents may make use of the facilities, such as the filmstrip projector, record player and ear phones, loop projector, etc. Each child may be shown how to operate the equipment himself -- being taught proper handling and care. An older school age child may help as a "teacher". When it is not disrupting for the Kindergarten and Grade one classes, Mini-Group children may join in with the activities in the rest of the school.

This is worked out with the teachers to minimize disruption of the Kindergarten and Grade one. At recess the Mini-Group may join with the rest of the children in the school yard.

In the classroom set aside for the Mini-Group, one parent usually takes charge for the day. Too many people "in charge" of the group makes it confusing for the children. This is also true when the group meets in someone's home. It appears useful for one person to be in charge, on a rotation basis, to ensure that some deliberate planning has been done for each meeting.

To help parents work with their children both at the school and at home, a Starter Outline was prepared. It includes suggestions for various kinds of activities from number games to excursions, for the selection and preparation of materials, and for keeping anecdotal records. The Starter Outline for Parents is attached as Appendix F.

The Mini-Group did not always meet every other week although that was its intention. In spite of transportation problems parents felt it was a worthwhile exercise and at the time of writing six families want to proceed with a continued program for the succeeding year.

As yet, no formal evaluation of this project has been conducted. Some successes, however, can be recorded. For example, some of the parents have become very skillful at "teaching" some of the concepts and skills. There is evidence that worthwhile learnings which are not merely "head starts" on the usual kindergarten program can be initiated. The gradual and informal induction into a "school" activity in which the "teachers" are their own parents apparently eliminates completely the upsetting experience that some youngsters encounter when first starting school.

The most notable shortcoming of the Mini-Group experience has been the reluctance (or perhaps the inability) of some of the parents to accept the overall planning responsibility, even for one session. Most of them were more content to focus on one project, skill or activity. Some improvement noted in this regard supports the view that at least initially the parents are the prime benefactors of cooperative preschool programs.

Chapter VII: THE KINDERGARTEN EVALUATION STUDY

During the 1970-71 school year H. G. Hedges of the Niagara Centre conducted a major study of volunteer parental assistance in schools. One important product of his study was a general operational model, which any elementary school could modify or apply in establishing a volunteer program. Maple Grove was selected as one of the schools to be identified with the implementation of the model. Its small size provided opportunities to observe a volunteer program in an informal structure. The rural setting gave promise of exploring problems and possibilities for volunteer work in a non-urban setting. Above all, because of the existence of a volunteer program in the school, Maple Grove afforded an opportunity to study the effects of modifying or adding certain steps in the operational model to strengthen an existing program.

The chief example of such addition of a phase of the model was the provision of a comprehensive evaluation of the kindergarten program. The inclusion of this phase in the implementation project was first suggested by the teachers themselves, when they expressed a need for a more formal and objective evaluation of the progress of their pupils in comparison to those of other schools, and for an estimate of the effects of the volunteer program on the findings of a formal evaluation study.

In the description that follows, the procedures and findings are presented in some detail, in the event that the reader may wish to analyze independently the results of the study, or to replicate

the procedures in another school. Besides illustrating a prototype for evaluation, this report indicates the difficulty of estimating accurately the effects of any one factor, and in particular volunteer parental assistance, on pupils' progress.

The evaluation consisted mainly of administering and analyzing the results of a battery of tests given at the beginning and the end of the kindergarten year. Similar procedures were followed in the experimental school (Maple Grove) and in three control schools, which were selected by a senior officer of the school system to represent a variety of general teaching methods and school settings. (See Table 1.)

TABLE 1. The School Settings, Teaching Method, Number of Pupils Chronological Age (C.A.), and Mental Age (M.A.) as determined by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Form A), for the Experimental and Control Groups, Maple Grove Kindergarten Evaluation, 1971; All C.A. and M.A. Adjusted to June, 1971

Group	Setting	Teaching Method	C.A.	M.A.
Control 1 (N=37)	rural	structured	6-0	6-8
Control 2 (N=38)	urban	structured	5-10	6-8
Control 3 (N=34)	urban	unstructured	5-11	6-3
Combined Controls (N=109)			5-11	6-7
Experimental (N=40)	rural	unstructured	5-11	6-2

In all instances the actual testing was conducted by experienced testers from the Niagara Centre or by personnel of the Lincoln County Board of Education. Every precaution was taken to eliminate or randomize factors which might influence the results. For example, each tester worked with half the pupils in each setting. Testing dates were randomized to offset any possible advantage of particular times of the day or week. The physical conditions for individual tests were chosen by each school. The overall testing conditions were roughly comparable between the schools, with the advantages, if any, in the direction of the control schools.

During May, 1971 the average mental age of each group was determined by the individual administration of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Form A). The mental ages were adjusted to June, 1971, the date for achievement tests. The results of the P.P.V. Test are shown in Table 1.

It will be noted from Table 1 that the experimental group was approximately the same chronological age as each of the control groups, but was slightly below each of the control groups in mental age.

Three tests were administered to measure the pupils' levels of achievement. These tests, and the characteristics that they measure, are identified in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Tests Administered and Objectives Measured by Each Test,
Maple Grove Kindergarten Evaluation, 1971

Test	Objectives Measured
(1) Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test	Reading Readiness
(2) Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT)	1. mathematics achievement 2. reading recognition 3. reading comprehension 4. spelling 5. general information 6. total achievement
(3) California Test of Personality (CTP)	1. Personal Adjustment A. self-reliance B. sense of personal worth C. sense of personal freedom D. feeling of belonging E. withdrawing tendencies (freedom from) F. nervous symptoms (freedom from) 2. Social Adjustment A. social standards B. social skills C. anti-social tendencies (freedom from) D. family relations E. school relations F. community relations 3. Total Adjustment

The Lee-Clark test, administered by school personnel, was given to the experimental group and two control groups. The testers who had administered the P.P.V.T. also gave the P.I.A.T. and the C.T.P. Each tester worked with half the pupils in each group, and randomized the testing times and dates. Overall testing conditions were roughly the same for all groups.

The results of the Lee-Clark Reading Readiness test are shown in Table 3. The experimental group showed marked superiority over the two control groups, particularly when the results are compared to the average mental age of the groups. The remarkable difference in the number of perfect scores further supports this conclusion.

TABLE 3. Results of the Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test, Maple Grove Kindergarten Evaluation, 1971

Group	Average Mental Age	Lee-Clark Reading Readiness Test	
		Average Scores	No. of perfect scores
Control 1 (N=36)	6-8	55.00	0
Control 2 (N=38)	6-8	55.36	0
Combined Control (N=74)	6-8	55.18	0
Experimental	6-2	59.85	10

Table 4 shows that in the Peabody Individual Achievement Test the experimental group had markedly higher achievement than the control

TABLE 4. Average Scores on the Peabody Individual Achievement Test, Maple Grove Kindergarten Evaluation, 1971

Group	Average Mental Age		Peabody Individual Achievement Test Average Scores					
			Mathematics	Reading Recognition	Reading Comprehension	Spelling	General Information	Total
Control 1 (N=37)	6 - 8	Raw Score	16.59	13.97	13.83	14.48	17.21	76.08
		Grade Equiv.	1.4	0.9	---	0.8	2.2	1.0
Control 2 (N=36)	6 - 8	Raw Score	18.18	15.60	15.21	16.34	15.65	80.98
		Grade Equiv.	1.5	1.1	---	1.1	1.9	1.1
Control 3 (N=34)	6 - 3	Raw Score	17.15	11.91	11.91	14.20	16.58	71.75
		Grade Equiv.	1.4	0.7	---	0.8	2.2	0.8
Combined Control (N=109)	6 - 7	Raw Score	17.32	13.90	13.71	15.04	16.47	76.44
		Grade Equiv.	1.4	0.9	---	1.0	1.9	1.0
Experimental	6 - 2	Raw Score	18.97	16.57	15.68	17.75	14.47	83.44
		Grade Equiv.	1.7	1.2	---	1.4	1.4	1.1

groups on four of the five objectives measured, and on the total, particularly when mental age is taken into account.



Parents at Maple Grove work with individuals and small groups, helping mainly in arithmetic and with special activities.





The professional staff and visiting researchers concentrate on determining pupil readiness, and on encouraging pupils to think and to explore new learning opportunities.





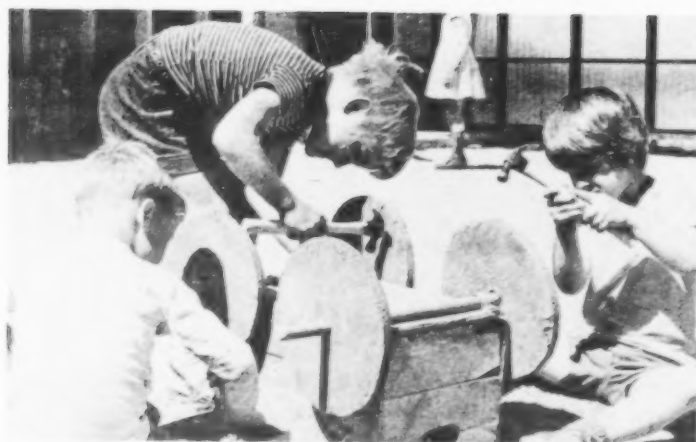
Natural learning situations, often outdoors, are established for both the mini-groups and the regular classes.





Practical activities apply natural interests, provide for growth in manual and mental skills, and encourage communication and cooperation.





Stories, audio-visual experiences, musical games, and painting are popular with the parents and pre-schoolers in the mini-group program.





Field trips to nearby locales provide opportunities for exploration, sharing, and communication.





Many learning experiences start with the day-by-day contacts with regular and visiting animal friends.





Cooperation from the local high school has led to the creation of unique and useful playground structures.

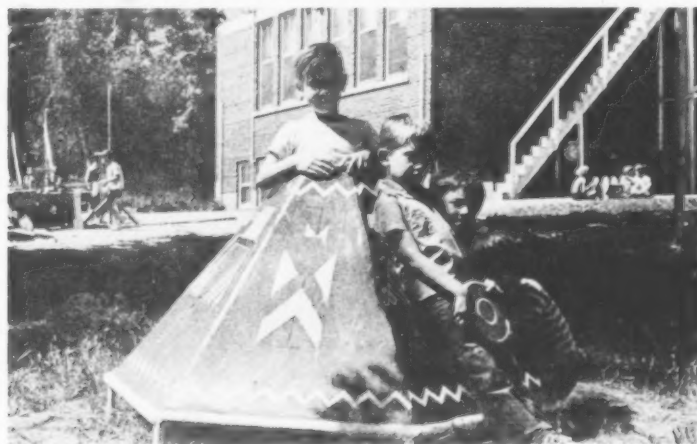


TABLE 5. Average Scores on the Characteristics of Personal and Social Adjustment Measured by the California Test of Personality, Maple Grove Evaluation, 1971

Group	Self-Reliance	Sense of Personal Worth	Sense of Personal Freedom	Feeling of Belonging	Freedom from Withdrawal Tendencies	Nervous Symptoms (FDN)	Personal Adjustment Test #1	
Control 1 (N=23)	5.87	6.39	6.09	6.26	5.22	5.43	35.26	
Control 2 (N=17)	6.12	6.82	6.71	6.59	5.24	5.24	36.72	
Control 3 (N=21)	5.86	6.86	6.05	6.38	5.14	4.19	34.48	
Combined Controls (N=61)	5.95	6.67	6.25	6.39	5.20	4.95	35.39	
Experimental (N=38)	5.76	6.34	5.61	6.16	5.68	4.89	34.44	
Group	Social Standing	Social Skills	Anti-Social Tendencies (FDN)	Family Relations	School or Occupation Relations	Community Relations	Social Adjustment Test #2	Total Adjustment
Control 1 (N=23)	6.39	6.35	6.04	7.04	6.13	6.30	38.25	73.51
Control 2 (N=17)	6.00	6.29	5.29	6.59	6.47	6.47	37.11	73.83
Control 3 (N=21)	6.29	6.00	5.24	6.90	6.67	6.33	37.43	71.91
Combined Controls (N=61)	6.25	6.21	5.56	6.87	6.41	6.36	37.66	73.05
Experimental (N=38)	6.05	5.74	5.66	6.76	6.05	6.89	37.15	71.59

In Table 5 are shown the results of the California Test of Personality, designed to measure personal and social adjustment. An analysis of the average scores of the groups on each of the characteristics indicates that the experimental group had equivalent scores with the control groups.

The results suggest that this test is limited in its ability to identify adequately differences in respect to growth in the test items.

Considering the differences in the entire evaluation study relative to pupil gain between the experimental (Maple Grove) group and the control groups, there is a natural temptation to attribute them to the one aspect of the Maple Grove program which differs markedly from the other schools, the addition of a volunteer parental assistance program. While the additional gain can no doubt be attributed to the difference in the total program at Maple Grove, there are at least four possible factors in such difference -- the more open, flexible program; variations in teacher competency; the use of home instruction by some parents; and the addition of volunteer help. Because we are unable to set aside any of these factors as possible explanations of the increased pupil gain, we must conclude that any one, or more likely some combination of two or more of these four factors, accounts for the significant differences in pupil growth in the areas tested.

While it is clear that the Maple Grove pupils showed increased gains over the control groups, there is no evidence to indicate

whether or not this superiority will persist over a long period of time, or whether it can be maintained if the program for the pupil changes sharply.

The cautions stated above, employed in interpreting results of the study, are not intended in any way to minimize or underrate the data, which show a marked gain by the Maple Grove students. Rather, they are presented only to guard the reader against reaching conclusions that would cite a single factor as the cause of the differences, or that would imply permanent superiority on the part of the pupils involved.

CHAPTER VIII: INITIATING A PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

Although the use of parent volunteers as integral components of the instructional setting comprises just one feature of the Maple Grove program, it must be considered the most basic of its several factors. Without extensive parent involvement, personnel insufficiencies would restrict program decisions to patterns very similar to those considered "traditional". Because the introduction of parents into the instructional milieu is not simple and straightforward, there is the tendency for teachers to avoid that source of assistance. The Maple Grove experience, however, indicates that through the use of parents many additional and innovative program facets become possible. Included here are some guidelines which will help teachers as they plan their own programs using parent involvement. These should be studied in conjunction with the general operational model in Chapter III.

There is really no such thing as ten easy steps to parent involvement. The first prerequisite is to recognize the need, then to alter the climate in the school in preparation. This MAY mean changing the focus to children and away from teachers. Classrooms MAY become less teacher oriented. Individualized teaching lends itself to volunteer assistance since helpers can't interrupt a class lesson if there is none, and the teacher doesn't feel as conspicuous circulating about the room as standing at the front teaching.

Parents and teachers should be convinced that they share a

partnership in which both parties and the child stand to gain. If a teacher feels uneasy, she should not feel forced to institute it in her room. This "volunteer" program should be voluntary for teachers to accept or reject, too. As a teacher sees the program develop in a colleague's room she may find it easier to become involved. Individualization should be exercised in teachers' handling of parent involvement. Each classroom teacher should work out parent-help the way it serves the situation best. Many parents will have children in several rooms and a certain amount of cooperation with staff will be inherent. It falls to the principal to coordinate the overall plan although a paraprofessional or parent might handle the actual scheduling.

After the atmosphere is as right as it will ever be, the staff might discuss how best to initiate parent involvement. There are several alternatives.

Recruitment

(1) The principal might call a meeting of parents and teachers to explain and recruit helpers for the school.

(2) Each teacher might have parents come to help as she sees fit. This would be a less conspicuous but more natural beginning and might well be preferable if there are skeptics on the staff.

(3) A letter and questionnaire might go out to parents as a "feeler" before any steps are taken. (See Appendix E.)

(4) OISE's help in the form of speakers, manuals and films could be solicited.

(5) Never recruit parents, especially as their introduction to parent-involvement, to take over lunch room and recess duties, to mop up messes and mix up paints. They must not feel that they are just brought in to do the school's "joe jobs". This is a sure-fire way to convince parents that their school tax is high enough to pay for the dirty work. It could provide one easy lesson in killing parental assistance. It would be like trying to plant a tree without roots. Parents will do their share of "joe jobs" but their involvement must have more heart to it than that. Rather than start with low level jobs and work in, it is better to start with the heart and work out.

Assignment

The teacher must take the initiative in assigning tasks. H.G. Hedges has listed tasks that parents are already doing in schools. (See Appendix G.) No matter what is assigned, it must be kept in mind that being a parent involves a child -- THE reason a parent is in the school -- and whether a teacher has a parent work with her own child or not, there should be some opportunity provided for each parent to communicate with her child's teacher.

Should a parent work with her own child? Unequivocally, yes, at least at the primary level. That's what parent involvement is all about. BUT there is a qualification to that statement. The teacher must monitor the situation. If a child clings to his mother, or takes advantage, is embarrassed or embarrasses his parent,

the teacher must be quick to take over the situation. Parent and child could be in separate locations with the implicit acceptance that the teacher is in charge. In Maple Grove, the parent usually is situated in another room. When a child feels strange, especially the first day of the parent's coming, and begs to be with the mother the answer is, "You know you have to share your mother with the other children! At 11:15 you may go to be with her for the rest of the morning." (Kindergarten goes home at 11:30) This has invariably satisfied both child and parent. The parent usually feels strange at first and welcomes interception by the teacher. It is comforting to her to know that someone feels confident and in control.

Communication

It is, in the final analysis, the teacher's responsibility to keep the lines of communication open. Once open, they usually run reasonably freely. The teacher's personality will determine her means for keeping the lines free. She may choose a formal method (interviews and forms) or an informal exchange of information -- comments in passing, phone calls or notes.

Organization and Maintenance

Either a paraprofessional or parent could keep schedules up to date, so this need not become an extra burden for the staff. The teacher must keep herself informed and prepared to handle any breakdowns, of course.

Evaluations of Parental Involvement

Continual evaluation through occasional discussion with parents is wise. At the end of the year, the Maple Grove staff habitually evaluates students, and they ask parents to evaluate the program. This could be in the form of signed letters or an anonymous questionnaire. (See Appendix H.) Both have been used. OISE is available to help evaluate academic gains.

But It Can't Be All Good

There are some questions which teachers always ask when they consider making use of parents. The Maple Grove principal offers her comments on each of them.

1) Would your individualized approach and parent involvement work in larger schools?

I don't see why not. A staff of three will have at least three problems; a staff of one hundred may have one hundred problems. Only cooperation will resolve them in either case. Even in conventional set-ups the larger staff has the larger job in the business of cooperation. Perhaps this in itself is a case for need for understanding. In a large setting a child may feel reduced to a number and a name alphabetically arranged on an attendance sheet. In this impersonal atmosphere it is easy then to justify skipping classes or indulging in vandalism in the sanctuary of the washrooms, or in more open spots if risks aren't too great. There may be little feeling of belonging. If, on the other hand, parents are involved, not in a

manner of policing, but as an indispensable ingredient for both teachers and students, the whole set-up takes on a warmer glow and life in the classroom becomes less cut off from real life. As it should, life develops in a continuous flow from home to school. In open concept areas I see no choice. The old conventional methods of teaching don't fit the new environment. I can think of nothing more chaotic and doomed to failure than 140 children and 4 teachers in an open area, each in a separate pod, each teacher trying to teach a separate lesson and control 35 children. The walls should never have been torn down. A large group CAN be fragmented into small groups or individuals, and, with added adult assistance, resources in such a setting can be tapped to the maximum. I think "Open Concept" demands the open approach both in the physical plan and mental outlook.

2) Would it work with older children?

Yes, BUT if children have grown up in the restrictive, regulated atmosphere of our conventional classrooms, it cannot suddenly be announced, "O.K. kids starting Monday no more rules." Nor can the teacher's attitude reflect her own misgivings: "I know this won't work, but since THEY insist, I'll try it and when it ends up a mess I'll throw it back into THEIR laps." Whoever THEY are, THEY must not impose such a system, and whoever the teacher is she must not abdicate her responsibilities. A teacher must do what is true to herself and her charges. Parents can be involved in a con-

ventional set-up. Their very involvement creates a little change. Evolution has begun. When older children have been "turned on" and allowed to learn at a rate commensurate with their abilities it is thrilling for all concerned.

3) Then do you have structure in your program?

Of course. I just don't hang the children on it. An observer at the school sees first of all children working at different tasks, and then, if that observer stays long enough he sees a supportive structure underpinning all that goes on. In my teacher mind I accept that primary children need to learn how to read, write and do arithmetic. Then I call into play all the methods and contrivances that my teacher mind has dug up. I divide our time into big blocks -- I don't dissect it into fragments. WE CONTROL THE TIMETABLE, it does not control us. I have been guilty, in the past of cutting off some piece of work that was flavoured with excellence as was the child's quality of attack because the time allotted had run out and the clock moved us on-- too often to an inferior activity. Return to that original excellence -- impossible! The chain had been broken. I'm concerned now with the links in the chain rather than time elements in my time-tabling. To judge the quality of a child's work, on criteria such as "able to finish a job within a time limit", seems too naive. We do make use of METHODS -- MANY of them.

4) How do you handle confidential information?

If there is some information that must be kept confidential at the school it is kept in a file until useful. If it is not useful it is destroyed. There is often less confidential information than one might expect. If by "confidential" is meant low achievement scores, something that might smack of stigma, we don't have any. Competition is played down, and instead of children being rated better or worse than their fellows, they are rated as working to capacity or needing to be paced. And this isn't tabulated in any incriminating score. It is written into the child's daily notebook. "He needs help with.... Do this....." It's the adult's job to help and as much the adult's failure as the child's if he doesn't succeed. It is a rare adult who will spread abroad, "I did a lousy job of helping your child at school." The adult becomes locked into the process and is no longer a detached, critical spectator.

5) Isn't there a real danger of mother-smother?

This hinges on the teacher's concept of children. If she thinks of them as candy coated little darlings needing mothers and mother substitutes to herd them through their golden age of childhood there will be mother-smother.

If the teacher thinks of children as having to be "broken" like a colt, and intones all day long, "That's not how you act in school," a mother may parrot the teacher and there could be mother-smother. But then again the mother may not!

If a teacher looks on a child as a young growing individual, and school as a place where he can find the tools and rules for his growth then there is little chance for mother-smother. The teacher and child will not allow it. School is the child's world. He is learning self-reliance, independence, his own capabilities. He will take pride in his own achievement. Lisa (aged 5) said, "Don't tell me the word. I want to figure it out myself." The child will ask for help when he needs it. He will direct much of his own learning -- it is uncanny how he can do it if only we have confidence in him. This does not mean we watch him flounder or go haywire. There is a fine line, as any skilled parent or teacher knows. A teacher must guide parents in knowing when to step in and when to keep hands off. A parent may guide the teacher in regard to her particular child. It becomes a study in human development and cooperation. Parent involvement may actually help parents to cut the apron strings.

If a teacher looks on parent involvement as an aid to running off dittos, to keeping children in their seats working, be it at more dittos or busy work, at controlling and directing the child's every movement and thought, then there will be mother-smother. An overprotective parent will overprotect in a classroom conducive to overprotection. The parent will usually reflect the atmosphere of the school.

6) What do you do about the problem parent?

My stock answer is that I prefer to box with the real thing

rather than shadow box with a ghost. If a parent is a "trouble maker", it is like grabbing on to an eel if you try to corner him. But if that parent is coming into the school on a regular schedule you have a chance to talk with her without making a big thing out of it. I have yet to find a parent who would deliberately lie or make trouble for the sake of making trouble. Usually ignorance of the facts is the cause. If a parent is coming to school she can judge whether the facts fit the fiction. If they do, maybe they need changing; but most often the parent will say, "I just didn't understand and I got worried." Being human, unless a path is beaten to the proper door, a compaliner complains to everyone but the one who can do something about it. Having a path or our door is a boon as far as problem parents are concerned.

What do I do with her once I have her here? I find out where she can fit into our program and put her to work. The big job is in cultivating her confidence and getting her here in the first place. Then my first job as the teacher is to cultivate acceptance, then trust on the part of the parent. If a defiant parent takes the opportunity provided by her involvement to tell me how to run the school, I must prove to her that I am at least sincere in what I am about.

Once I have convinced the parent that we are all right, there develops a mutual respect. I believe that parents have as much to offer as I have -- in some instances, more. They are not second

rate citizens in my classroom. They have brains too. There are times when I can learn something from them. In order for things to run smoothly I, as the teacher, must lay the ground rules. When it has happened that a parent started "taking over" I have let her in on some of the interesting developments of the child so far and what our plans are for him and why. The attitude is invariably, "Well, I guess you do know more than I do about it. Tell me what I should do." It has always been as simple as that. No need for panic, no rush to chuck parental involvement.

7) Do you use all parents who volunteer then?

Of course. I have yet to find a parent who hasn't something to offer. It is the teacher's responsibility to find the right tasks for each one, to fit each one in, by individualizing parent help just as we do for pupils and teachers. We must make use of each parent's strengths.

8) What do you do about liabilities, and legal responsibilities?

I investigate and irradicate them where possible. I shoulder the rest. A principal and teacher have to be willing to do the same. It will depend on their cautious or reckless natures, how much each will assume.

9) What does Federation say about volunteers "teaching"?

Nothing. Maybe because I don't ask. I assume that since I am a bonafide member of Federation that a mutual confidence must exist between me and my organization. Entrusted to me is the final

decision as to how I can best run my classroom and nothing I do is going to be traitor to that trust. I discharge my responsibilities to the child, to the parent, to my profession with as much integrity as I can muster but I do not give over to an organization a decision that is mine to make. I am bringing parents into my classroom for reasons far beyond the concept of cheap help. I am accepting my responsibility for the "teaching", which I can improve with parent power. I believe that a mature Federation calls for this type of decision-making on the part of its teachers.

10) How do you handle visitors?

As long as they do not come in droves, we handle them as they appear, preferably by previous arrangement. We put them to work and the children relate to them as to any volunteer -- a helpful adult. Visitors will take away whatever fits into their own experience. They may know, after their visit, what they will not do, but at least we hope they accept Maple Grove for what it is, an experiment in living and learning.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Outline of Arithmetical Program and Skills
- Appendix B: Sample Pages from the Parents' Manual
- Appendix C: Report on Student Activities
- Appendix D: Log of Parent Teaching Activities
- Appendix E: Initial Questionnaire
- Appendix F: Starter Outline for Parents of Mini-Group Children
- Appendix G: Some Suggested Tasks for Volunteer Parents
- Appendix H: Anonymous Parental Involvement Questionnaire

Appendix A

Outline of Arithmetical Program and Skills

CATEGORY

CATEGORY				
A	B	C	D	E
Main Sequence of Arithmetical Skills	Psychological Underpinnings of Arithmetical Skills	Symbol Utilization	Problem Solving	Measurement
I Rote Counting	Formation of Sets	---	---	---
II Matching Number Names and Objects	Matching Sets	Numerical Recognition	---	Introduction to Measurement and Measuring Devices
III Rational Counting	Ordinality (Order)	Numerical Printing	Non-numerical Measurements Problems	Non-numerical Measurements Problems
IV Conservation of Number	---	---	---	---
V Addition-Subtraction with Concrete Objects	---	+, -, =	Addition-Subtraction Word Problems With Concrete Aids	Fixed Unit Measurement
VI Multiplication-Division with Concrete Objects	---	X, ÷	Multiplication-Division Word Problems With Concrete Aids	---
VII Consolidation of Number Facts	---	---	Word Problems Without Concrete Aids	---

OUTLINE OF ARITHMETICAL PROGRAM AND SKILLS

Appendix B

Sample Pages from the Parents' Manual

S(A) . 11.B : Matching of Sets

For children of kindergarten age, this skill probably needs to be practiced rather than taught. Make use of such opportunities as the following:

- (a) The child is asked to get five cups out of the china cabinet and place them around the supper table with their matching saucers.
- (b) He is asked to make sure that each plate at the table has a napkin beside it.
- (c) Have the child pick out the corresponding members of two basketball, football, or hockey teams.
- (d) Draw two sets of geometrical figures (circle, square, rectangle, oval, five-sided figure, six-sided figure) on a piece of paper. Make sure the elements of each set are not in the same order. Make one set large and the other small, and have the child draw a line between the matching objects (e.g., the big square and the small square). If different colors are used this exercise is capable of infinite variation.

S(A) . 11.C: Numerical Recognition

This may be simply accomplished as follows:

- (a) Write the numerals from 1 to 10 in a horizontal line on

a piece of cardboard. Keep this available for the child's use.

- (b) Have the child count through this series, pointing to each numeral in turn as he says its name.
- (c) To show that numerals have some practical utility, show the child that the pages in a book are numbered. Then say, "Show me page 7." He may have to look back at his number line to find out what 7 looks like.
- (d) When he can read the numerals from 1 to 10, extend the number line until it becomes a two-dimensional array as shown below.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49
50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59
60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69
70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79
80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99

- (e) At this point we can show him the regularity in both the verbal number names and the numerals used after 10. Thus, starting with the second row we would point out how each name is modified (e.g., "three" becomes "thirteen") and how each numeral is modified (e.g., a 1 is placed before the 3.)

- (f) The child may be expected to enlarge gradually his understanding of this number complex (from 1 to 100). If he is able to identify all the numbers in this set by the end of the kindergarten year he will have accomplished considerably more than the traditional program asks of him. Certainly, he will be able to begin more advanced work with numbers -- e.g., addition and subtraction -- if he can identify only the first ten numbers or so.
- (g) Give the child an opportunity to read the numerals which he can identify. For example, let him read speed limit signs, the price of things seen in stores or magazines, and the numbers on weighing scales, rulers and clocks.
- (h) A good demonstration of the value of being able to identify numerals can be found in the use of telephone numbers. Let the child memorize his own phone number and, on some occasion when he is away from home, give him the opportunity to see that it really works. Similarly, he may want to list the telephone numbers of his friends and phone them occasionally. Another practical application here is the identification of the family car by the number on its license plate.

S(A).11.E: Introduction of Measurement and Measuring Devices

The intent here should be to convince the child that measuring instruments provide useful answers to the question "How much?" If the child can read fairly large numerals, then he need only be told what it is that the scale measures. For example, if the pointer on the bathroom scale shows 60 when he stands on the scale, the child can be told that "this scale tells us that you weigh 60 pounds." If he cannot read numbers this large, then the parent should read them for him. A large number of "How much?" games can be played, including the following:

How long is it? (ruler)

How long did it take?(stopwatch)

How much does it weigh? (weighing scale)

This initial acquaintance with measuring scales can be used to strengthen the child's notions of more or less, and his ability to make simple estimates. We might think, for instance, of the following sequence of questions.

- (a) How much do you weigh? (60 pounds, on the bathroom scale.)
- (b) Do you think Jeanie (little sister) weighs more or less?
(Child guesses "less".)
- (c) How much do you think she weighs? (Child guesses 45 pounds, and we weigh.) Well, you are pretty close. Jeanie weighs 49 pounds.

S(A).111.A: Rational Counting

The tasks here are a natural extension of the activities performed under P(A).11.A. What we have to get across to the child is that when he counts a set of objects, the last number that he uses answers the question "How many?" about that set. We might proceed as follows:

- (a) Have the child count your fingers. When he reaches five, say: "Five fingers. How many fingers?" The child should answer, "Five fingers." You then say, "Right. Five fingers."
- (b) After he has come to anticipate the question "How many?", do not give him the answer in advance. For example, if he has counted a row of eight buttons, merely say when he has finished, "How many buttons?"
- (c) Play the game "Give me _____ plums." To do this, a collection of some kind of object is placed before the child and he is asked to give you a number of them.
- (d) Play the game "Who has the most?" The child is dealt four cards (they are counted) and brother is dealt three (they are also counted). The child is to indicate who has the most cards.

- (e) Extend rational counting to different kinds of objects (e.g., not all in the same place) described in P(A).11.A -- (b) to (d).
- (f) Give practice in identifying at a glance the number of things in a small group. For instance, hold up three fingers for a moment and ask the child "How many?" Reduce the exposure time as the child becomes more proficient.

S(A).111.B: Ordinality

After the child can match numerals and objects (P(A).11.A) you might proceed as follows:

- (a) Set out a number of objects (probably ten to start with) in a straight line. Say, "If I start from this end (pointing to left) and go that way (pointing to right), then show me the first block I would come to. Now show me the second block. Now the third." And so on.
- (b) Go through the whole series with the child, saying, "From this end (indicate) this is the first (point), this is the second," etc.
- (c) Do the same thing starting at the other end.
- (d) Once the child knows the names of the positions, have him verbalize his understanding as follows: "To get to the third one, I count over three."

- (e) Play the game "What comes before the third?" "What comes after the third?"
- (f) Give the child a pencil and say, "Put the pencil between the third and fourth apples, counting from this end (indicate). Put the pencil between the sixth and seventh apples", and so on.
- (g) Later, using the two-dimensional array of numbers employed previously in P(A).11.C, show the regularity of the position names (e.g., first, twenty-first, thirty-first, . . . , fourth, fourteenth, twenty-fourth, thirty-fourth, etc.).

S(A).111.C: Numerical Printing

The child's ability to print numerals when he is told their names will lag, at first, behind his ability to identify them. This is due in part to the fact that in order to be able to print them he must first be able to recall what they look like. Second, of course, the young child has some difficulty controlling the fine muscles which are involved in printing. After the child can recognize the numerals from 1 to 10 the following sequence may be employed.

- (a) Ask him to print the numeral 7 (or any other) and allow him to trace it from some standard form.
- (b) Ask him to print the numeral 7 and allow him to copy it from some standard form.
- (c) Require him to print the numeral 7 from memory.

The child's ability to print the numerals for larger numbers can obviously be increased as his ability to recognize numerals (S(A).11.C) increases.

S(A).111.E: Non-numerical Measurement Problems

The intent here is to provide the young child, who may be very shaky in his use of numbers, with an opportunity to solve simple problems involving quantity. We would also want to use this occasion for convincing him that the ability to read scales accurately has some practical value. The parent will be able to find many opportunities to create problem situations of the following kinds.

- (a) A new rug arrives for the living room and the old one is to be put in the dining room. The old rug, however, appears to be too large for the dining room and will have to be cut down. Also, it is easier to cut a piece off the rug while it is still in the living room. The question is: "Find out how much I should cut off the end of the rug so it will fit in the dining room."

Appendix C

Report on Student Activities

REPORT ON STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Please insert in
front of manual

Date Feb. 4, 1970

Language Arts Program (Manual, p.5)

	A	B	C	D	E
Areas Examined	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student Working At	<u>VI</u>	<u>IV</u>	<u>IV</u>	<u>II</u>	<u>V</u>

Suggested Parental Help:

p 27 - S(L) II B - continue, sort out the ones he missed
continually and send to me.

- S(L) II C (abb) - keep on. Mark seems to need
practice hearing the sound.

p 29 - S(L) III B - continue. p 31 - S(L) IV - continue.

Arithmetic Program (Manual, p. 12)

	A	B	C	D	E
Areas Examined	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Student Working At	<u>V</u>	<u>III</u>	<u>III</u>	<u>V</u>	

Suggested Parental Help:

p 42 - S(A) II C - (d) (g), (h)

p. 44 - S(B) III A

p 45 - S(A) III B (a-c)

p 46 - S(A) III C

p 51 - S(A) V(A)
(a-d) - go slowly

Signed Edna Thompson

Appendix D

Log of Parent Activities

LOG OF PARENT TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Date	Area in which working (Use Code)	Time Spent	Comment (if any)
Feb. 4, 1970	S(L)II B	5 min.	Mark has 40 words.
	S(L)II C	15 mins.	He knows them all. Mark worked hard but has trouble recognizing sounds. Did not go on because he was tired after this length of time.
	S(A)II C d		Recognizes to 100.
	S(A)III B (a-c)		Not too sure but coming.
	S(A)III C		His hand of printing difficult.
	S(A)IV A (a-d)		He understands addition and enjoys it.
Feb. 7, 1970	Repeated above		Tonight Mark brought me the orange book and asked to work in it. He really worked hard for over a half hour.

Appendix E

Initial Questionnaire

Please complete and return

NAME OF KINDERGARTENER

NAME OF PARENT

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

1. What is your child's attitude toward starting school? (Is he happy, frightened, etc.?)
2. Does he have any special physical problem such as bladder control, heart trouble, need of rest, allergies, eating problems. Please list and explain.
.
.
.
3. List brothers and sisters with ages.
.
.
4. Note any behaviour patterns that would be helpful for us to know, e.g., shyness, temper tantrums, fears. Give us some tips on the discipline you find most effective.
.
.
5. What language do you speak in your home?
Does your child speak and understand English?
What other languages do you speak?
6. Have you training in secretarial work, library science, music (what instrument) physical education, dancing, picture framing, clay modelling, drama?
Any other?

7. Would you be able and willing to act as a volunteer helper, either on a regular basis or for special occasions during the year? (We need the masculine touch so we would welcome father volunteers as well as mothers)
8. Have your Kindergartener bring a sample of work to show us what he can do a) a picture b) printing - his name and numbers (if he doesn't print don't worry). To what extent has he tried to read or work with numbers?
9. How do you expect your child will progress in school?
.

Appendix F

Starter Outline for Parents of
Mini-Group Children

MAPLE GROVE MINI-GROUP

OBJECTIVES OF PROGRAM

(A) For the participating mother, the weekly session should provide an opportunity both to learn some new ways of stimulating the child, and for sharing her own ideas and experiences with the group. Most of the skills introduced by the Niagara Centre team will require further practice and consolidation at home, if they are to have a large effect on the child.

(B) For the child, the sessions should provide -- in addition to the types of mental stimulation described below -- opportunities for social development (learning to share, to cooperate and to show concern for their children) and a start towards independence (getting used to new surroundings; later on, to being away from mother for a time).

Proposed Emphases

1. We feel that number work and reading are sufficiently well covered in the Parents' Manual. While these skills are important, there is a danger of parents associating them with their own recollections of school, thus of focusing too narrowly upon them.

2. The input from the Niagara Centre team will be aimed at the more general stimulation of the child's intellectual activities. Our intent will not be to give the child a head start in the traditional reading program, but to begin the development of intellectual

skills which underlie mental functioning generally. Perhaps it should be noted that many of these skills are not now taught by the school, and their absence seems to underlie the inability of many adults to cope with the sorts of problems they encounter in real life.

A partial listing of the aspects of thinking that the Niagara Centre group will be stressing can be found on the attached sheet.

(C) We should note that mother's concern with these skills (with the development of the child) should not stop with the child's formal entry into school. Parents should continue to stimulate mental growth along the directions indicated; we cannot assume that the school will do this.

Proposed Method of Operation

1. A mother should be designated as "leader" for each meeting. She would act as liaison with the school, as the person to be notified in the case of difficulties, and so on.
2. The sessions should not be too long. It is better to have to drag the children away than to stay until they want to be taken home.
3. The room should be organized into "activity centres". For example, building materials (blocks, clay, mechano toys) could constitute one centre, while things to write, draw and paint with could be another. Similar centres could be created for a perceptual - motor skills thinking box (which includes: experiments, jig saw

puzzles, etc.,) and conservation materials (water to pour, plasticene and sticks of equal length.)

4. During the $1\frac{1}{2}$ - 2 hour weekly session the child should experience a variety of learning situations as follows:

i. Group learning activities. (In these short sessions children can be brought together for a counting game, for identifying letters of the alphabet, or for questioning games.)

ii. Individual learning experiences. (These are sessions in which one mother works with one child, possibly with a Niagara Centre team member demonstrating a technique.)

iii. Cooperative learning. (Situations in which children help each other do something or share equipment or counting materials.)

iv. Organized group play. (Games, singing, dancing, stories.)

v. Free play. (In which the child goes to whichever activity centre he chooses.)

5. It may be useful to begin with a free play period. When the children arrive and take off their coats, they will go directly to whatever activity interests them most. Mothers can use this interlude to organize and discuss the day's plans.

6. It is valuable for mothers to work with children other than their own, since this broadens one's perspective in relation to the learning tasks. Moreover, it will help the child to learn to adapt to other teachers. A good way to do this is for each

mother to become proficient in at least one of the skills or activities. For example, one mother might do the "thinking box", another might do experiments, and a third might do classification.

F. G. Robinson, Ph.D.
Head, Niagara Centre
March 6, 1972.

AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD THINKING

(1) Observation

With a relatively small amount of formal instruction, and possibly with some continuing game experiences, we believe that we can improve significantly pupils' observations and the vocabulary used in describing their observations. For example, it is probable that a six-year-old in describing a tennis ball will refer to it in a manner lacking precision, and state only one or two characteristics of the ball. It is probable that with good questioning he could add four or five characteristics to the description and develop suitable words for describing what he sees. The procedure can be converted into an interesting observational game by creating an observation box in which an object can be placed and pupils can use only one or two sentences to describe the object which they also then attempt to identify. As the vocabulary of description improves, this might become a fairly routine daily activity. In addition to the usual references to size and colour, pupils might refer to weight, texture, bounce, shape, etc.

(2) Inference

Pupils can learn to make increasingly more precise inferences from certain amounts of information. This can be taught by providing youngsters with certain kinds of verbal information from which inferences are made. Then they can be taught to make inferences

from pictures or situations. It is then possible to use an inference box in which objects are placed in a way that will prevent the pupil from making any direct use of sense information. For example, if there are three marbles in a closed shoebox, the pupil would have to manipulate the box in various ways in an attempt to gather data which he cannot get by direct observation. Then he proceeds to infer what the object in the box is. This activity can also become a regular activity in the classroom. It has the further advantage of stimulating and improving vocabulary and conversation.

(3) Sense of Humour

We are all aware that individuals appear to have a sense of humour developed in different degrees. There also seems to be some benefit from having a "good" sense of humour. Some aspects of the development of humour appear to be teachable, but this area has not been adequately explored. We believe that it is possible to make pupils more aware of the elements of humour in stories, situations, pictures, etc. More insight into variations in expressions of humour and, in fact, in what seems humorous to pupils probably is required and could be a positive outcome of a short series of lessons.

(4) Decision Making

The ability to make "better" decisions, or even the ability to make a definite decision, are worthwhile goals that can be taught. Some approaches to this activity would be: i) encouraging

pupils to make and examine decisions based on certain amounts of information, ii) the ranking of the importance of factors underlying a decision, and iii) an evaluation of decisions made by others based on a certain set of information. One outcome of the activity in addition to the improvement of youngsters' decision-making would be the insights that are derived about the ways in which youngsters make decisions, and the kind and importance of factors that influence the kinds of decisions they make.

Doing Experiments

One important aspect of intellectual development has to do with determining whether something influences or has an effect on something else. For example, does the shape of a container influence the amount of time required for the liquid it contains to cool? The reason such cause-effect relationships are important is that they allow us to make predictions; hence they show us how we can produce some desired result (e.g., if we want to cool our coffee quicker, and we know that the rate of cooling is proportional to the exposed area, then we might pour it in a saucer).

Children's cause-effect notions are quite immature, as we might expect, yet they do seem to contain some elementary notion of what a "fair" comparison is. For example, children seem to realize that if you want to make a fair comparison between a little alley and a big alley, in respect to which will run down

C

an inclined plane the faster, then you should not give one an advantage by pushing it, you should start both alleys at the same place, and you should keep the steepness the same for both.

What we would do at the Grade 1 level would be to present children with a number of such "games", have them make predictions, and get them to talk explicitly about the fact that some things have to be kept the same.

Classification

Most teachers encourage young children to sort groups of objects (e.g., blocks) into sub-groups. Unfortunately, this sorting experience is not developed to the point it might be, so that we probably do not give the child the sort of concrete experiences that would be of value to him in many aspects of logical thinking.

What we would do with Grade 1 children would be to start in the usual way, but then have the child move to more complex sorts of classifications (for example, cross classifications and tree classifications). We would also see if the child could be taught to use an efficient way of representing classes of objects and their relationships, at least for easy cases. For example, at some point he might replace his piles of objects by dots on a paper, then replace the dots by circles.

Ordering

The child begins to develop a sense of order at a very

young age. This is an important skill in understanding the action in stories, in understanding and giving directions and in developing a general sense of coherence in relation to sequences of events which happen over a period of time.

Our approach with Grade 1 children would be to have them use concrete representations of objects to represent the order in statements or stories; then we would move to more convenient representations (e.g., simplified diagrams.)

Another approach is to break a simple story, event, or object into separate parts or steps and have the children reassemble it in keeping with their sense of order.

Questioning

Although it is recognized that the ability to ask a good question becomes an increasingly important skill as we get older, we tend to give children very little practice in asking questions, and endless help in improving their questions, so that the general level of question-asking tends to remain quite immature.

Our approach with Grade 1 children would be to put them into situations which tend to elicit questions, to get them to discuss why some questions are better than others, and have them propose questions which are better than the initial ones which they asked.

Conservation

One of the most researched aspects of the child's mental development centres on the notion of "conservation", that is that qualities such as weight and amount remain constant when a body

is transformed (and its appearance changes).

It might be profitable to do two or three sessions with Grade 1 children to see whether they conserve or not, and if not, to encourage them to do so. Part of the training would involve grasping the notion of things being equal; in teaching "equality" we would have to counteract the child's tendency to believe that one thing must either be bigger or smaller than another.

Measurement

Children progress through a series of stages in respect to measurement as they do in respect to any other skill. At an early age they learn to distinguish bigger from smaller on the basis of apparent size. Later they learn to compare the length of objects by laying one along side the other. Later still they learn to use a third object as a common measure, and so on.

Our approach with Grade 1 children is intended to take them to the level at which a standard unit is used to compare objects of different lengths. This is an important level of attainment if the child is to undertake any sort of independent discovery which depends on measurement.

We recommend that youngsters be given considerable experience in measurement, using such "standard" units of measurement as the lengths of various objects, the weight of a baby-food tin of sand, the volume of a jar or glass of water, etc.

Appendix G

Some Suggested Tasks for Volunteer Parents

SOME SUGGESTED TASKS FOR VOLUNTEER PARENTS

H. G. Hedges

Note: This list is not complete. We would appreciate your contributions to the list. The tasks listed are not equally applicable to all grade levels. Many of these tasks would not be initial tasks for the volunteer, but rather would be ones that volunteers could be assigned as they demonstrate ability and reliability.

Clerical

Collecting lunch and milk money
Requisitioning supplies
Keeping attendance records
Filing reports
Writing for free materials
Maintaining pupils' cumulative records
Entering marks in record books
Averaging marks
Entering marks on report cards
Keeping records of books pupils have read
Keeping inventory of equipment and supplies
Preparing seating plans
Preparing library cards
Typing, duplicating stencils, etc.
Typing children's stories
Typing, duplicating class newspaper

Typing, duplicating school open letter to parents

Duplicating scripts for plays, etc.

Maintaining a file of representative work of
each pupil

Filing resource materials for each unit

Setting up parent-teacher interviews

Classroom Maintenance and Administration

Supervising seatwork

Supervising work areas

Mixing paints, etc.

Assisting with art aprons, drop cloths, etc.

Arranging instructional materials for lessons

Distributing, collecting, washing, sorting equipment

Supervising clean-up time

Assisting with coats, overshoes, etc.

Keeping bulletin boards neat and current

Maintaining general housekeeping of room

Assisting with blackboard care

Writing assignments on blackboard

Preparing kindergarten refreshments

Arranging interesting study areas, such as reading
area, science corner, etc.

General Non-Instructional

Assembling related supplementary books
Selecting films, filmstrips for lessons
Assembling, selecting pictures for lessons
Proofreading class newspaper, etc.
Collecting test papers, projects, homework, etc.
Assembling resource collections, indexing and
storing, e.g., artifacts, minerals, leaf prints,
maps, etc.
Organizing a master picture file
Organizing a 35mm film slide file
Organizing filmstrips into an integrated
collection, catalogue and card file
Obtaining specific materials for science, social
studies lessons
General supervision of classroom at specific times
Supervising indoor games (breaks, rainy days, etc.)
Checking library books in and out
Helping pupils select library books
Making arrangements for special speakers
Supervising instructional games (e.g., math games)
Displaying pupil work in various ways
Performing routine health tasks-measuring and
recording height, weight, routine eye chart

Administering routine first-aid
Attending sick or injured pupil
Telephoning re sick pupil; taking child home
when necessary
Accompanying injured child to doctor, home or
hospital
Telephoning re absentees
Telephoning, if necessary, to verify notes
re pupil leaving early, etc.
Supervise club meetings
Assisting or supervising special pupil committees
(constructing, rehearsing, experimenting, etc.)
Helping pupils settle quarrels, disputes
Helping in organization, rehearsal, etc. of pro-
grams, assemblies, etc.
Setting up special exhibits in classroom or school
Supervise individual study carrels
Monitoring study hall
Caring for pre-school children during teacher-
parent conferences, etc.
Helping supervise field trips
Assisting with special 'errands'
Supervising tests

Audio-Visual Assistance

Ordering, rewinding, returning films etc.

Reproducing sound tapes

Setting up and removing AV equipment

Operating projectors

Organizing, instructing pupils as AV operators

Preparing overhead projectuals

Previewing films, filmstrips

Preparing brief introductions as background
for viewing

Maintaining AV equipment (oiling, cleaning lens
and gates, checking lamps, cords, etc. on
regular schedule, such as once per month).

Perhaps one qualified father would do this.

See also suggestions re master picture file,
35 mm slide file, and integrated filmstrip
file and catalogue

Prepare catalogue of resource materials in school
and special resources (persons and materials) in
the community.

Instructional

Preparing objective tests, e.g., spelling lists,
marking tests.

- Preparing pupils' profiles
- Checking homework
- Checking record books using teacher criteria
- Observing, describing specific behaviours
- Preparing instructional materials--flash cards
for mathematics and reading, cutouts, sewing
cards, alphabet cards, drill card sets, trans-
parencies, models, etc.
- Collecting, organizing, arranging displays to
be used in lessons.
- Teaching a group to play an instructional game
(e.g., math game)
- Preparing special learning material to meet
individual needs or differences, e.g., special
study guides, sample programs, taping, reading
or math material for less or more advanced
pupils, etc.
- Teaching or re-teaching specific skills or
concepts to special groups
- Tutoring individual pupils
- Helping individuals with work missed because of
absence, etc.
- Reviewing content, skill of previous lessons

Repeating parts of lessons for slower learners
Assisting pupils with specific learning tasks
and recording in book or file for individual
Assisting with routine spelling, punctuation on
request as pupils write stories or compositions.
Listening to pupils read orally; record difficulties
Instruct pupils in proper and safe use of tools and
equipment
Teach etiquette, good manners, etc. to small groups
Listen to pupils read their own stories
Prepare special demonstrations in art, science, etc.
Provide musical accompaniment
Tell stories to groups or class
Assist in group discussions
Help pupils discover and select research and
reference materials
Dictate spelling, number drill work, etc.
Supervise groups in laboratory work
Write assignments, etc. on blackboard
Drill individuals or groups with word, phrase,
phonetic, mathematics flash cards, identification
cards, etc.
Prepare and present lesson or unit on an enrich-
ment or special interest topic.

January 28, 1972.

Appendix H

Anonymous Parental Involvement Questionnaire

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

(Note: In order to encourage frank comment, we would prefer that the questionnaires be returned unsigned.)

- (1) In a typical school week how often did you make use of the Parents' Manual and how long did each learning session tend to be?

I would say that after memorizing the sequence of questions in a certain category (eg. rote counting) that I used the method, if not the manual itself every day, whenever a situation arose where it was possible. I found I was doing it unconsciously. Sessions were about 5 min. at a time.

- (2) Were the descriptions of the program and proposed activities clear enough to follow?

Yes definitely, although we did specialize in certain areas. I am not certain I read the manual from cover to cover.

- (3) Did your role as home instructor lead to your having a better understanding of your child's school program?

Yes definitely. It was good for both the child & myself. He looked forward to the days I went to school & I needed a very good excuse on the few days I was unable to attend.

- (4) Would you want to participate in a similar arrangement at the Grade 1 level if it were available next year?

if possible, but we expect a new baby in September.

(5) What advantages and disadvantages can you see in this type of parental involvement?

I can't think of any disadvantages except that the child might expect me to know as much of his learning program another year & might expect help when learning new things & I may be unable to help him (new math).

I enjoyed knowing just exactly where my child was in the learning process & where he needed help. I was able to encourage him at home.

For a five year old, who had just moved away from his friends, school could have been a frightening experience at first, but my going with him from time to time, seemed to make him feel more relaxed.

It is good to know the teacher on a more personal basis, & is easier to talk frankly with her, as a friend, not a stranger, concerning your child.

I intend to use the outlined methods I have learned, for my other children, whether or not this method is continued at school.